

REMARKS BY THABO MBEKI AT THE FUNERAL OF PRIME MINISTER MELES ZENAWI:  
ADDIS ABABA, SEPTEMBER 2, 2012.

Your Excellency Deputy Prime Minister HailemariamDesalegn,  
Our dear sister and comrade AzebMesfin and members of the Zenawi family,  
Comrades of the EPRDF,  
Brothers and sisters of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,  
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government, leaders of foreign delegations, and Members of  
the Diplomatic Corps;  
Fellow mourners:

I am deeply humbled to stand here on this immensely sad day to say a few words of farewell to a  
very dear friend, comrade and leader.

It may very well not be in my province to say this to you, sister people of Ethiopia, but I would like  
to tell you how much I and many others on our Continent have been moved by the outpouring of  
grief you have demonstrated since the sad and tragic news was announced that Prime Minister  
MelesZenawi had passed away.

The grief you have expressed in your millions throughout the length and breadth of Ethiopia, and  
over so many days, constitutes an extraordinary tribute to a truly outstanding son of this ancient and  
historic land and a truly eminent son of Africa – a tribute more powerful than can ever be expressed  
in words.

It is a matter of great pain to many of us who had the privilege to work with him that because of  
cruel, unexpected and untimely death he could not be with you to hear what you thought of him, to  
listen to you in your millions tell him that all the sacrifices he made for the liberation and upliftment  
of the people of Ethiopia were not in vain.

There are many of us here today from elsewhere on our great Continent of Africa who are here as  
individuals. We also have with us the eminent and elected leaders of the peoples of Africa who  
therefore represent the African masses.

We too, your fellow Africans, are here to join you to pay tribute to MelesZenawi and to convey to  
you our sincere condolences at the loss to you of a great architect of the new Ethiopia, and to us  
who come from outside the borders of this country, the loss of one of the great architects of the new  
Africa of which the billion Africans dream, and for which they are engaged in daily struggle.

In terms of our years of birth, MelesZenawi was younger than me.

And yet throughout the years I have had the privilege to know and work with him, it never occurred to me that he was my younger brother.

He carried within his head the gift of a brilliant mind, which was enriched by constant study and sustained learning.

He was forever a student the better to understand not only the challenges facing Ethiopia, but also the imperatives our Continent has to address, both of which have to achieve their advance within the context of the evolving global situation within which we live and work.

He was forever the diligent student of whom I have spoken because he had taken to heart the injunction that he had a task not merely to understand the world, but also to change it.

As much as MelesZenawi carried in his head a brilliant and analytical mind, in his warm heart was also deeply-embedded a passion, a dream and a prayer for the upliftment of the peoples of Ethiopia and Africa, their emancipation from poverty and underdevelopment, and the fundamental renewal of our Continent.

And thus did he come to stand out as one of the principled, dependable and militant cadres for the renaissance of Africa, ever ready to contribute whatever he could to help realise this vitally important goal.

There are many of us present here today who will bear witness to the important contributions he made during such seminal moments in Africa's recent history as the formation and development of the African Union, the adoption and implementation of NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanism, and the continuing processes towards the resolution of conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

There are also many present here who will speak with admiration about the fact that MelesZenawi did not provide leadership merely by word of mouth.

He and his colleagues in the leadership of this country have done an outstanding job in terms of agricultural and rural development, education, health, the provision of water, electricity, telecommunications, infrastructure development, and generally the economic development of Ethiopia, as well as the national unity of this diverse country.

In this way he and his colleagues have added very valuable practical experience to the store of knowledge which Africa is accumulating as she continues the historic process to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment, thus to achieve a better life for all our peoples, which is fundamental to the achievement of the renewal of our Continent.

The illustrious Ethiopian and African patriot whose mortal remains we lay to rest today was a man

of slight build.

But that slight frame hid within it a true African giant who carried high above his head a bright torch which lit our way to the new future towards which Africa's masses aspire.

Our best tribute to this giant, MelesZenawi, must surely be that we do not allow that torch either to fall or be extinguished.

Farewell dear friend, brother and comrade.

Your race is run, but the struggle continues.

Rest in peace.