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Concluding Remarks

Dear Organizers, Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure and honor to make a closing remark at this special Symposium addressing Religion and Human Rights.

I shouldn't wait to express the beauty and attraction of Utah State, Provo, and BYU. Congratulations.

Our reason for being here is Professor Cole Durham and his colleagues. We were working on the draft of religious legislation via his visit in Ethiopia and correspondence facilitated by the US Embassy in Ethiopia. I would like to thank using this very opportunity Professor Cole Durham and his colleagues, Carol Willson and Brian from USA ID Ethiopia, who made our attendance possible.

This symposium on religion and human rights created an opportunity to learn about country experiences and to rethink about the dynamics of religion and humanity.

The expertise gathered, the depth of ideas discussed, and potential options pursue further, and influencing arguments endorse the higher standard, the quality and productivity of the symposium.

The design of the symposium discourse, from classroom deliberations to live performances, brought the spirit of unity and collaboration with academia, government, and citizens at large representing a wider range of nations. The contributions, engagement, and services by BYU volunteer students was exceptional and professional.

Colleagues, the subject of religion and human rights must be viewed as a process of natural endowment of individuals and groups expressing/manifesting their internal needs and final destinations.

The trust is, religions shall promote peace, love, and unity. We also learned that observing religious rights is associated with national growth and development, being peace is a playing factor.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many constitutions and practices acknowledge the same, put it in practice, and protect it from any abuse.

On the other hand, we shall also not downplay the reality of elements who would like to use religion as a means for their political ambition. In such cases, religion may lose its original purpose, misused and subsequently might be the cause for civil unrest and sectarian conflict.

Therefore, the world must watch and closely work to track such tendencies and curb the process as soon as possible.

In Ethiopia, we have history of tolerance and coexistence among religion followers for the last 1,400 years. We have a constitution that rectifies the then-existing irregularities and mistrust, recognizing and protecting diversities, including religion.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution that came into force in August 1995 has clearly outlined religion-related parameters we shall pursue. Article 11 defines the state and religion separation; Article 25 defines religions' equality regardless of numbers, and Article 27 defines religious freedom. Article 34 indicates disputes resolution and marriages can be undertaken by religions or cultural mechanisms provided that both parties agree to go through the same process.

Therefore, today Ethiopia is a secular state. There is no state religion or religious state. However, accommodative of our history of tolerance and coexistence would

be FDRE Constitution recognition and protection of diversity, including religion; there are elements of radicalism and extremism that are challenging us today, using religion as a means of political ambition.

In this regard, the whole world must work together and united. Since any act of radicalism and extremism, including terrorism, may come into reality in a certain country and get expanded in a history of hours and days.

Therefore, my recommendation is that religion and human rights subject must address the two sides of the coin, since human rights violations are becoming prevalent with elements who would like to use religion to fulfill their political ambition. We must be united and networked to ensure religion as peaceful as it was for centuries.

Finally, I commend the organizers for creating such an important gathering to share worldwide experiences along the lines of religion and human rights.

Last but not least is that I would like to invite all participants here to visit Ethiopia and enjoy the hospitality we serve and visit the nation of your ancestors.

As megalithic finding disclose that Ethiopia and Rift Valley networks are where the first humankind is discovered. Ethiopia's old face never characterized today's new Ethiopia. There are massive social, economical, an infrastructure developments in the last two decades.

Ethiopia is also known for coffee arabica, which is the main export commodity. The coffee ceremony in Ethiopia helps Ethiopians wherever they are to retain their identity, manifest good womanhood, and keep the social fabric intact. If you happen to be in Ethiopia, the coffee ceremony will await you, to strengthen our social fabric as well`

We recorded two-digit (11%) growth in the last ten consecutive years, as indicated by World Bank and IMF. Ethiopia's economic growth is one of the ten fastest

growing nations in the world. There are great opportunities for investment, tourism, and networking as we are also the seat for the African Union as well.

Finally, thank you so much for the great attention, and see you soon, in Ethiopia next time.