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**Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier  
at a state banquet hosted by the President of the Federal  
Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ms Sahle-Work Zewde,  
in Addis Ababa/Ethiopia  
on 28 January 2019**

I am delighted to be here with you at a time of great change. Recent months have shown what can be achieved by having the courage to change. Your country has overcome old divisions and bravely made a new start.

Madam President, allow me to express my warmest congratulations once again on your election and to wish you all the best. I am very grateful to you for the warm welcome to your beautiful country. I last visited Ethiopia almost five years ago. When I arrived here today, I was happy to see the famous lion again. But most importantly, I am very curious about all the new people I will meet in the coming days. And I am particularly looking forward to visiting one of the cradles of Christianity, the world famous churches hewn into the rocks in Lalibela.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ethiopia and Germany are united by a long standing friendship. That is why we are following with particular interest the reforms your country has begun. These reforms make me hopeful that social participation and democracy can continue to advance.

Yes, there are still deep rifts in your society and old conflicts are easily reignited. Overcoming them and achieving reconciliation in your country is a huge task. By the way, in my country, too, we also see that it has not become easier in recent years to preserve social cohesion. It is true that democracy is often hard work and requires constant compromises. In a country like yours, which is home to people of so many different cultures and ethnicities, this is an enormous challenge. But it is also a great opportunity!

When I speak about great opportunities, there is one thing I must mention. The peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea is a

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harbinger of hope for the people in your two countries, but also for the region here at the Horn of Africa and for the entire continent. Ethiopia plays a crucial role in stabilising this region. And Germany is happy to continue providing active support to both your internal and external reforms.

If the shift to democracy works, I firmly believe that it will have an impact far beyond your country's borders and also enrich the debates in Europe – a debate on democracy that is currently often conducted in a rather defensive or even pessimistic manner and a debate on Africa, in which we talk about Africa rather than with it and too often only perceive the crises!

It is sometimes difficult for us in Europe to deal with the complexity of the African continent, as we experience startling concurrency there. We perceive opportunities in many countries that are modernising and opening up socially and politically, but we also perceive crises, conflicts and regression. A good antidote to this is to see things for oneself and to speak with local people. That is another reason why I am so happy to be here. Africa cannot be pigeonholed. It is not a single entity. Africa is a proud continent with 54 very different countries and very different cultures – and that is what defines its diversity and richness.

We Europeans need new trust based partnerships with Ethiopia and as many other African countries as possible. We can only resolve global challenges together. The Compact with Africa, which the German Government launched in the G20, stands for new partnerships of this kind. As regards global challenges, I am thinking of climate change and its impact, but also of migration. Your country has taken in huge numbers of people and we have great respect for the support you have provided.

I firmly believe that we, Europeans and Africans, must join forces to improve prospects for young people in particular in your countries and I am pleased to be able to count on your support in this, Madam President. Sustainable development is a key to this. You need investments and young people in your country need good training. We are happy to support Ethiopia in both areas.

We Germans have the utmost respect for the courage with which your country has set off on a new path. I wish you patience and determination in pursuing this path.

Madam President, allow me to propose a toast to your health and to the friendship between our two countries.