

**FLASH NEWSLETTER  
ETHIOPIAN MILLENNIUM**



**SEPTEMBER 12, 2007  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

September 2007

On September 12, 2007 Ethiopia has celebrated the new millennium, finally entering its third millennium. The seven years and eight months difference compared to the western chronology is due to the fact that Ethiopia never switched from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendar. The Ethiopian year is divided in twelve months of thirty days plus one five-day month (which includes six days during bissextile years). This is the reason why Ethiopians like to say that their Country offers thirteen months of sunshine.



A year worth of festivities has been organised to mark the turn of the millennium by a specially-appointed secretariat. The celebrations, that will take place all across the Country for one year from September 2007, will include concerts, fairs, various sporting activities, tree planting initiatives, national monuments unveiling and the creation of new museums and parks. The capital, Addis Ababa, is preparing to welcome, according to government's estimate, hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians from the Diaspora, foreigners of Ethiopian origins as well as visitors from all over the world.



The African Union has decided to adopt the Ethiopian Millennium as the official African Millennium, in recognition of the Country's unique history and culture. Ethiopia's President Girma Woldegiorgis has billed the celebrations an opportunity to unite the Country towards the effort to fight poverty and advance democracy. The United Nations as well, through the General Assembly's Resolution n. 61/270, co-sponsored by Italy among other countries, recognized the year from September 2007 to September 2008 as the year commemorating the Ethiopian Millennium.



The peace doves in Meskel Square, main square of Addis Ababa



# Ethiopia celebrates the new millennium...

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

Addis Ababa – On New Year's eve, the night between September 11 and 12, fireworks lit up the sky above the city, as people gathered in the streets to celebrate the New Year. Others gathered in churches all over the Country to mark the occasion. Amid a tight police deployment, tens of thousands of Ethiopians from across the Country and the Diaspora flocked to the city to take part in the Country's biggest ever party.

The privileged few who could afford tickets costing as much as average annual per capita income of 160 dollars were seated in the Millennium Hall, a new venue built for the occasion and financed by Ethiopian-Saudi billionaire Sheikh al-Amoudi.

This exclusive event, whose highlight was the concert by US hip-hop group the Black Eyed Peas, was attended by foreign dignitaries and a number of African leaders, including several heads of state such as Sudan's Omar al-Beshir, Rwanda's Paul Kagame and Kenya's Mwai Kibaki.

Speaking at the main event to



welcome the Millennium, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi spoke of the glories of Ethiopia's first 1.000 years. He said decline then occurred, but now it is time for an Ethiopian renaissance. "A thousand years from now, when Ethiopians gather to welcome the fourth Millennium, they shall say the eve of the third Millennium was the beginning of the end of the dark ages in Ethiopia," he said. Because it was never colonized, Ethiopia has always had a special significance for the rest of Africa - which was summed up by the chairman of the African Union, Alpha Oumar Konare: "We thank Ethiopia for keeping up the flame of African unity".

Ethiopian President Girma Woldegiorgis pardoned nearly 18,000 prisoners to mark the arrival of the New Millennium,

St. Stefanos Church

However, Ethiopians have mixed feelings about the Millen-



nium celebrations. On one hand, they love Enkutatash, the New Year holiday. It is a time for family reunions, and visiting friends. On the other hand, some residents of Addis Ababa criticized the government's campaign to clear the streets of beggars and the rising cost of food ahead of the celebrations. But officials were keen to make the year-long celebrations that kicked off on Sep-

tember 12 an opportunity to convey a different image of their Country to the rest of the world.

"What Ethiopia is known for abroad, like droughts and famines, doesn't reflect the reality of our Country," Tourism Minister Mohammed Dirir said before the celebrations started.

"The millennium is a good opportunity to change the image of Ethiopia, certainly a sub-Saharan country currently struggling against poverty, but with a steady growth and a multi-religious country," he added.



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Meskel Square, main square of Addis Ababa

The Ethiopian Millennium Festival will run for one year, from September 2007 to September 2008 with an overall theme: "On the move to a prosperous Ethiopia by establishing a politically strong and economically dynamic society".

Many events are scheduled to take place throughout the year, such as music, handicraft and food festivals, tree planting and parks and museum creation.



## MOHAMMED HUSSEIN AL-AMOUDI SPECIAL MILLENNIUM PERSON



The Ethiopian tycoon, Sheik Mohammed Hussein Al-Amoudi, was awarded by the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi with the "first special millennium golden medal" for his exemplary deeds for the development of Ethiopia and its people. "Al-Amoudi decided to engage in various investment projects in Ethiopia, long before he even proved that the projects would be profitable", said Meles. "He did this, because of his love for the Country where he was born and for its people."

Al-Amoudi also paid a great contribution by constructing the Millennium Concert Hall at cost of 10 million birr (about 1 MUSD).

The Ethiopian Millennium was celebrated all around the world. In Washington DC, where an important Ethiopian community lives, a five-day extravaganza was organized. It included symposia on the future of Ethiopia, music gala, soccer competition, a prayer vigil and a millennium march for democracy and human rights in Ethiopia.



## The Italian Development Cooperation In Ethiopia

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### Who Are We

The Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGCS) of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the governmental institution responsible for managing the Italian Development Cooperation program. The DGCS includes 13 offices, in addition to the Central Technical Unit, and 22 Country offices located in countries considered as priorities for the Italian Public Aid. The activities of the Italian Cooperation in Ethiopia focus on the following sectors:

- Education
- Health
- Energy
- HIV/AIDS
- Water
- Rural Development and Food Security
- Women and Children
- Private and Industrial Sector
- Good Governance and Capacity Building
- Cultural Cooperation
- Humanitarian and Aid Emergency Response

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...and all our dedicated Support Staff!