



To:

Ms Ana Gomes (S&D)
Ms Mariya Gabriel (EPP)
Ms Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL)
Mr Fabio Massimo Castaldo (EFDD)
Mr Jordi Sebastià (Greens/EFA)

P.O. Box 20061
2500 EB The Hague
The Netherlands
<http://www.government.nl>

Our reference
2016.122229

Date 7 March 2016
Re Your letter of 18 February 2016

Dear members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for your letter of 18 February 2016, in which you expressed your dismay over a tweet by the Dutch ambassador to Ethiopia. Please allow me to clear up any confusion that may have arisen regarding the views of my government.

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs encourages its diplomats to make optimal use of online platforms, including social media. They are given ample opportunity to engage with and inform other users. It is up to the diplomats themselves to decide how to tweet, what to tweet and whom to follow. The Twitter policies of the Dutch foreign ministry are based on the principle that everyone who uses Twitter for professional purposes is personally responsible for their online conduct. Diplomats are expected to adhere to the prevailing Twitter etiquette. In her tweet the Dutch ambassador intended to draw attention to both the resolution by the European Parliament and the differing opinions on the situation in Ethiopia.

The tweet by the Dutch ambassador in Ethiopia should in no way be perceived as an endorsement of the content of the linked statement, let alone as an attempt to undermine the validity of the European Parliament's resolution.

The Netherlands shares the concerns that were raised in the parliamentary resolution of 21 January 2016 on the situation in Ethiopia. We are troubled by the lack of democratic space and a free press in Ethiopia. We are also concerned about the large-scale protests that have taken place in Oromia over the past months. Excessive violence was used by both the Ethiopian security forces and the protestors. The Netherlands joins the European Parliament in welcoming the withdrawal of the Addis Ababa Master Plan and encourages the Ethiopian government to enter into a dialogue with the Oromo people over these and many other issues.

At the same time, positive trends can be observed. Ethiopia has made significant progress in alleviating poverty. It has met almost all Millennium Development Goals, and its government is committed to achieving equitable economic growth. The Netherlands is committed to continuing to work in partnership with the Ethiopian government and with its European partners and the European Union for the future growth and development of Ethiopia.

Date
February 2016
Our reference
2016.222229

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a long horizontal line that ends in a small vertical stroke.

Bert Koenders
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

cc.
Ms Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission
Mr Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament