

MOTIVATION LETTER TO ORGANIZE THE 2011 IAG REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN ADDIS ABABA ETHIOPIA

The motivations follow the following background concepts

1- Establishment of EGA

Ethiopia is under the establishment of a national committee known as the Ethiopian Geomorphological Association (EGA). So far the following people have shown interest to register and a meeting will soon be held.

- 1- Asfawossen Asrat (PhD): Cave science, Geochemistry, Geo-sites- Interim Chairman
- 2- Mohammed Umer (PhD): Quaternary Geology, Environment and Climate change also ExCom member of the IAG
- 3- Mitiku Haile (Professor): Soil science
- 4- Bekele Abebe (PhD) Structural geology
- 5- Dagnachew Legesse (PhD): Remote sensing and GIS
- 6- Biniam Tesfaw (Msc): Remote sensing and GIS
- 7- Zewdu Eshetu (PhD) Soil science, high resolution climate studies
- 8- Rahel Getachew (Msc): Geomorphology, soils, GIS
- 9- Tsige Gebru: Buried soils, charcoal anatomy
- 10- Gezahegn Yirgu (PhD): Volcanology
- 11- Jan Nyssen (PhD): Geomorphology, slope processes, land use (changes), soil and water conservation, sustainable land management, farmers participation
- 12- Paulo Billi (Professor): River hydrology and geomorphology
- 13- Francesco Dramis (Professor): Geomorphologist (slope process, paleo-sysics, buried soils, landscape evolution, mapping)
- 14- Woldamlak Bewket (PhD): Geography
- 15- Abebe Yeshano (PhD): Climatology
- 16- Seleshi Nemomsa (Professor): Systematics, Plant genetics and Plant Dispersal history

The upcoming meeting will focus on explaining about IAG including about the status of National committees. It will elect an interim committee that will strengthen the members and that will work on the constitution.

2- Background to previous IAG linked meetings

Three meetings under the auspices of the IAG have already been held tow in Addis Ababa and one in Mekele. All three included presentations and field trips. The meetings were all successful. The meetings were the following:

- a- IAG International Symposium on Climate Change, Active Tectonics and Related Geomorphic Effects in the High Mountain Belts and Plateau: 9-10 December 2002 with pre-and post field trips.

- b- IAG – AIGEO meeting on Environmental Analysis and Geomorphological Mapping for Sustainable Development: Addis Ababa February 25th to March 6th /2008.
- c- Highland 2006 conference Mekele-

We have also recently organized an East African Quaternary Association 2nd meeting here in Addis Ababa Ethiopia between May 20-25/2009. Also attached find the complements sent from the participants. The participants were from East African countries, South Africa, Nigeria, France, Belgium, UK, Ireland and USA. The meeting with two days excursion, in the lakes region, was the most successful.

3- Facility

Infrastructure development is going on very well in Ethiopia. Several International Standard Hotels exist and are being built in the capital as well as in some regional towns. Roads are mostly in very good condition now. Internet facility is available even in several of the regional main towns.

4- Geomorphological Features

The highlands

Ethiopia is a country whose altitude ranges 160m below sea level to over 4000m. These has provided it with diverse climate and environment making it one of the unique countries.

For example the Ethiopian Highlands are distinguished from the rest of Africa by their vast extent of high ground. They cover an area of some 519 278 km², almost 95% of which falls within the political borders of modern Ethiopia, although, to a lesser degree in neighboring Eritrea. The geographic and cultural heartland of this region is a vast plateau, averaging 2 200 m and split into two halves by the Great Rift Valley. The Ethiopian Highlands are extremely rugged and varied, with some regions characterized by steep escarpments and deep valleys. Rising to a height of 4 620 m at the summit of Ras Dashen in the scenic Simien Mountains, the highlands are truly the “Roof of Africa,” with the majority of land over 3 000 m in Africa being found in this region. Indeed, around 73% of Sub-Saharan Africa's Afroalpine ecosystem (which is defined as being over 3 200 m) is found in Ethiopia.

One consequence of the altitude and isolation of the highlands is that they have favored speciation of colonists to the region. Although most species in the region are of Afrotropical origin, some Palearctic influences are also evident.

The highlands are also sources for rivers that drain into the neighboring countries: the Blue Nile towards Sudan and Egypt, omo to Lake Turkana, Awash to lake abhe, Wabishebele to Somalia. This has led to provide it the connotation “the water tower of

Africa” although ironically there are phenomenon of Drought and Flood that the country needs to deal with.

The surrounding lowlands

The great rift valley has been the place for conserving one of the best evidences of Human Origins and Evolution. In its Northern part, it is also where one of the rare evidences, on a continent, of the birth of a new ocean can be studied. Recent volcanoes including active once can also be observed.

In its central part there are magnificent lakes whose history have been widely studied from shore-line marks as well as on out crop and core sediments. They have been one of the few reference sites for Pleistocene evidences of hydrological and climate changes for tropical Africa.

5- Culture

Ethiopian also support a rich and ancient cultural diversity; as an example, modern Ethiopia harbors some 70 languages. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was founded in Axum in the fourth century; Harar, probably founded in about the eleventh century, is considered as the fourth holiest Muslim city in the world.

The above conditions are some of the elements that have motivated us to organize the 2011 IAG Regional Conference representing the African continent. Our capital is also the capital of the African Union. We are ready, we just need the green light from the Melbourne IAG Conference.