

## Speaker's manuscript – Peace Prize 2019 Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali

### The Nobel Peace Prize

- The Nobel Peace Prize is one of the five prizes founded by Alfred Nobel and awarded on 10 December every year.
- Before Nobel died on 10 December 1896, he wrote in his will that the largest part of his fortune should be used to fund a prize to those who "have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind".
- One of the five prizes should go "to the person who has done the most or best to advance fellowship among nations, the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and the establishment and promotion of peace congresses".



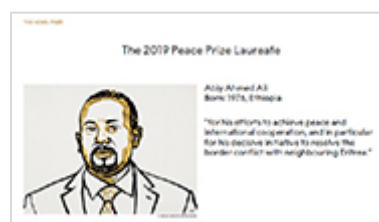
### Who is rewarded with the Peace Prize?

- In 1901 the first Peace Prize was awarded to Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross. Right from the start, the Norwegian Nobel Committee thus adopted a broad interpretation of the peace concept; humanitarian work is also a way of promoting peace.
- The prize can go to individuals and organisations that fight for disarmament, conflict resolution and human rights.
- One example of a Laureate in recent years is Malala Yousafzai (2014), who was rewarded for her struggle for the equal right of all children to education.



## The 2019 Nobel Laureate

- The 2019 Nobel Peace Prize is being awarded to Ethiopia's prime minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali.
- He is being rewarded for the reforms he has already implemented in Ethiopia, but above all for having taken the initiative to resolve the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.
- In a statement accompanying the prize announcement, the Norwegian Nobel Committee – which selects the Peace Prize Laureates – also highlights the role Abiy Ahmed has played in peace and reconciliation processes elsewhere in East and Northeast Africa.



## Ethiopia – the second most populous country in Africa

- Ethiopia is located in Northeast Africa. With about 110 million inhabitants (2019), it is the second most populous country in Africa, after Nigeria. Ethiopia has borders with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and South Sudan. The country's capital is Addis Ababa.
- Ethiopia is one of the fastest-growing economies in the region. At the same time, a large percentage of its population lives under difficult conditions. One fourth of the country's inhabitants live below the poverty line – on less than one US dollar per day.
- Formally, Ethiopia is a democracy. But since 1995 the country has been governed by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), an alliance of several organisations that represent different ethnic groups. EPDRF has been accused of repressing political opponents and limiting freedom of expression in Ethiopia.
- In February 2018, former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn submitted his resignation. In April of the same year Abiy Ahmed was selected as the new prime minister and the new chairman of EPRDF.



## The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea

- After the Second World War, the United Nations decided that Eritrea – previously an Italian colony – should enter into a federation with Ethiopia. This led to conflicts, and in 1961 Eritrea began an armed struggle for independence that would last for three decades. In 1993 Eritrea became an independent country.
- In 1998 war again broke out between Ethiopia and the now-independent Eritrea. This war continued until 2000 and cost nearly 100,000 people their lives. Among the reasons behind the war was a dispute about how to draw the border between the two countries.
- In their peace treaty, the countries agreed to ask the UN to decide the border dispute. However, Ethiopia did not accept the decision made by the UN Boundary Commission. It refused to hand back an area that, according to the decision, belongs to Eritrea. As a result, tensions remained and the countries became isolated from each other.



## A new peace agreement

- When Abiy Ahmed became prime minister of Ethiopia, he announced that his country would now approve the two decade old decision made by the UN commission. He promised to hand over the areas that, according to the UN commission, belong to Eritrea.
- In July 2018 Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki signed a new Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship, in which they agreed to restore diplomatic relations and reopen telecommunication links and air routes between their countries.



## Numerous reforms in Ethiopia

- Abiy Ahmed has also quickly implemented numerous reforms in Ethiopia. This has included releasing thousands of political prisoners, strengthening freedom of expression and increasing the role of women in political and community life.
- Abiy Ahmed has promised that the elections scheduled for 2020 will be free and fair.



## Efforts to mediate in other conflicts

- In its statement accompanying the peace prize announcement, the Norwegian Nobel Committee emphasises that Abiy Ahmed has also engaged in other peace and reconciliation processes in East and Northeast Africa.
- In September 2018, for instance, he and his government contributed to the normalisation of diplomatic relations between neighbouring Eritrea and Djibouti, after many years of tensions.
- Another example concerns the protracted conflict between Kenya and Somalia over rights to a disputed marine area, which Abiy Ahmed has acted as a mediator. There is now hope for a resolution to this conflict.



## Quote from the press conference during the announcement of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize

- During his period as prime minister, Abiy Ahmed has taken initiatives and implemented reforms to promote reconciliation, solidarity and social justice both in his homeland of Ethiopia and regionally. Meanwhile many challenges remain. In particular, Ethiopia is plagued by difficult conflicts between various ethnic groups.
- The Norwegian Nobel Committee hopes that the Peace Prize to Abiy Ahmed will strengthen him in his continued work. "A peaceful, stable and successful Ethiopia will have many positive side-effects, and will help to strengthen fraternity among nations and peoples in the region," said Berit Reiss-Andersen, Chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, when the prize was announced.

