

The nature of the "Sululta as Davos" project

The "Sululta as Davos" project got its name from two small cities that are close in terms of ecology and climate but located at different ends of the world: the Ethiopian/African Sululta and the Swiss/European Davos. The project aims to make the Ethiopian Sululta a center city for international conferences, just like Davos in Switzerland, to create a favorable environment in which African issues will be on the agenda of Africans, on African soil.

The basic idea of the project is the continuous and periodic Africa-China on Sululta. It is said that it is possible to make the city a conference center by organizing African-Russian, African-European, African-American, BRICS, etc. conferences. African young leaders, African artists, Pan-Africanists, African elites forum and other economic, security, and health forums and by establishing and implementing regular contact times, African scholars, politicians and business leaders will create a comfortable environment where they can discuss their destiny independently of other countries and institutions outside the continent. In the long run, we can change the situation where we are only being invited by Africans, and we can make the world come to Addis Ababa, the political center of Africa, to advise on bilateral, tripartite and multilateral relations. Above all, we Africans shape the agenda of conferences, forums and seminars, so it creates an environment where new African narratives can grow and develop.

By doing this, Ethiopia is a symbol of freedom for African countries, and the role it played in the unity of Africans and the flourishing of Pan-Africanism through its previous leaders, as well as the service it provides as a political center and second home for Africans, can be transferred to another higher phase. When AFLEX moves with this national mission and African agenda, it will gain energy to serve as Ethiopia's diplomatic arm. As an academy of excellence, it will have the opportunity to spread the new ideas it generates to others and to create connections with institutions working with similar objectives. It should not be forgotten that making Sululta a tourism and conference center will not only have a financial legacy for the center but also generate foreign currency for our country's economy.

This project started this year, on the one hand, it is linked to Ethiopia's 10-year development plan and will go through the construction process continuously for the next eight years. Accordingly, after three years, this project is believed to achieve the following five goals.

- The "Sululta as Davos" project has become a key agenda of Flex Reform, a part of Ethiopia's 10-year development plan and a project recognized and accepted by the African Union Agenda 2063.
- Sufficient funds and resources have been collected from local and foreign partners and stakeholders for the implementation of the "Sululta as Davos" project;
- With integrated infrastructure, security and safety, media and branding works, Sululta City has been able to reach a level of competence and acceptance where it can prepare large international forums;
- AFLEX has created the institutional capacity to effectively plan, organize and execute international conferences, meetings and seminars.
- African-oriented international conferences and meetings that have attracted the attention of influential and international media have started to be held in Sululta City;

Sululta and Davos

Sululta and Davos are two cities with similarities and differences. First of all, both cities have in common that they are sparsely populated. Sululta has about 15,000 urban residents; Davos has a population of about 11,000. Although Sululta (8530 feet) has a higher elevation than Davos (5118 feet), both cities have in common that they are located at higher elevations than their nearest larger cities. Being small towns outside of major cities, they offer relief from the hustle and bustle of the city, noise and air pollution. Both the cities have close cool climates and their topography is beautiful for easy viewing of the surrounding areas.

On the contrary, Sululta is 26 km away from the country's capital, Addis Ababa, and Davos is 148 km away from Zurich, the capital of Switzerland, and 272 km away from Bern, the political center of the country. Looking at the economic base of the cities, Sululta's economy is based on agriculture, while Davos is a diversified economy with an economic system that emphasizes tourism. Thanks to the annual World Economic Forum, Davos has high international recognition; Being a city that hosts international leaders, politicians, intellectuals and business people; Sululta, however, has not been able to utilize its tourism and natural resources. It is a city that has no recognition beyond the area. The climate of Davos is seasonally variable, with temperatures ranging from a low of minus 10°C to a high of over 20°C throughout the year,

depending on the season. In contrast, the temperature in Sululta is almost constant throughout the year, ranging from 8-25 degrees Celsius.

Relative superiority

Sululta Davos is not to be confused with the hotels and resorts that the city has. It also lacks standard restaurants serving traditional and modern cuisine. Nor did it build Davos-style sports and entertainment facilities. In contrast to Sululta, Davos has several museums that house all kinds of art and culture, and hosts a variety of cultural events, including the Davos Film Festival.

These issues place Davos at a higher level of selectivity, and on the other hand, both cities share; In some cases, there are existing conditions that give Sulululta a relative advantage. It is said that one of the reasons that makes Davos the ideal destination for conference tourism is its excellent transport service. Both tourists and conference attendees to Swiss cities can easily travel to Davos by train, bus or taxi from Zurich, Geneva, Basel or other cities. However, no matter which mode of transportation you use, it should take at least two and a half hours to travel. On the other hand, a meeting participant who entered Addis Ababa, the capital of our country by plane, can reach Sululta in less than an hour, even with the current incomplete transportation conditions. If it were possible to build a modern rail and road service like Davos, it would be possible to get there in even less time.

Another thing that makes Davos a favorite is its natural setting and climate. The snowy seasons of Davos attract tourists who love skiing and similar activities. Even though the Sululta does not have snow like Davos, it has a convenient location for local and international sports, including horse riding. Especially, its climate is better than Davos, and it has an average temperature that does not prevent the holding of conferences throughout the year. Its air is better than Davos, which is visited by thousands for the sake of their respiratory health and is not polluted by poisonous smoke. Instead, it is accompanied by fresh air from the surrounding forest.

Structural and human factors

The contrasts of natural setting, climate and economic structure have their advantages in our long journey to make the city of Sululta an internationally recognized conference tourism city of Davos. However, more than that, it is necessary to study in detail the structural and man-made

factors that made Davos the best and to properly understand the homework we need to do from there.

Davos is a very peaceful city that offers its guests a sense of security and personal freedom. This allows international leaders and conference participants to conduct effective and confidential individual and joint discussions; It also allows visitors to have a fun time. In terms of infrastructure, Davos owns conference centers that can provide world-class services, countless lodging and accommodation options, and hospitality organizations that can feed thousands of attendees at the same time and according to their choice. The principle of political neutrality that Switzerland has followed for a long time and is known for has made it popular among international leaders who want to have open discussions in an environment away from politics. While the natural and man-made advantages detailed above make Davos the preferred destination for conference tourism, the reputation and international recognition it has built over a long period have opened more doors for it.

Conducive conditions

The project of making Sululta like Davos is doable but requires a lot of commitment and practical action. The structural and man-made problems that we have are not what motivate us to know the resources we have, and based on it, to collect more resources, but not our energy.

First of all, this project needs the commitment of the political leadership. As it is known, since the change, development projects born by the greatness of ideas that could not even be imagined in our country have been designed and concrete results have been achieved. The "Sululta as Davos" project also requires a long-term vision, investment, practical action to complete the infrastructure and a global campaign to build awareness.

AFLEX is currently in the process of expanding and building an infrastructure project that will create a conducive environment for training and research, communication and innovation. The infrastructure construction is compatible with nature and the environment, uses renewable energy sources, has its own drinking water supply and waste disposal system, and includes a conference center that can accommodate thousands of attendees, classrooms, dining and sleeping rooms, and other entertainment and park infrastructure. Since the campus of AFLEX is wide and there is a

large undeveloped area in the areas of the city outside the campus; As in Davos, various traditional and modern sports facilities can be built to attract tourists. For example, the 18-hole golf course that is planned to be built at the academy will be the first of its kind in our country and in the region and will increase the popularity of the city.

Based on the possibility of Sululta City being located at a close distance from Addis Ababa, it is a great opportunity to build more modern transportation services that connect with neighboring areas, including Bole International Airport. Especially, a connection with Entoto Park which is providing services and the forest project which is in the process of construction will give Sululta a special beauty and increase her tourism preference. As our country is a country of many man-made and natural tourist destinations, it is necessary to facilitate the guests who have stepped foot in the Sululta to move to other areas extend their stay and be satisfied with their stay. At the same time, other infrastructures of the city, cleaning, beauty and green development should be strengthened through regular and special development plans.

Ethiopia, like Switzerland, is a country with political neutrality and a foreign relations policy that follows the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Our diplomatic relations with near and far countries only prioritize our national interests and the honor of citizens and are not bound by any political ideology. By strengthening this, leaders, scholars and investors, Ethiopia is trusted for international discussions; It is necessary to make them believe that it is an independent country where free expression of ideas is based on their experience.

To gain the kind of international recognition that Davos has built, it requires the successful organization of international conferences and events and long-term and continuous media and communication work. From this point of view, the Tana Security Forum, which has been held every year in Bahir Dar city, can be a source of ideas, even if they are limited. Even so, we realize that our experience and ability to sell through media and communication is weak, not to mention at the international level, even domestically, and we have to work hard to bring about a fundamental change in this field.

How will the vision be realized? From where to reach the peak?

First, let's make Sululta and the Academy the center of the country's conferences. If we bring our big national conferences to the academy, the academy will share the experience. Indeed, it can be seen that Sululta is a unique and preferred place for such activities. The dream of making Sululta like Davos came from this little play and was practical, just as the Rome band never built in a sunset. Thus, the dream of making Sululta like Davos should start now. To deal with this issue successfully, we need to build an infrastructure of conferences that maintain the quality, scope and reliability of the academy. Similarly, it is better to protect and ensure the local peace differently. Along with this work, it is also necessary to do preparatory work that will enable the academy and its surroundings to start organizing at least continental conferences. Also, it is necessary to pass a common agreement and decision and take practical action to make the area a conference center like the government. If we do this, it will be cut off from the stupid door, even though we are the seat of the African Union, we can take the cake and beat Rwanda's Kigali, which is suffering, by hosting most of the meetings of this organization. In addition, the Oromia region, the local government and the community should be enabled to buy into this goal and contribute to its implementation. In all this process, it is necessary to work closely with local, continental and international media. Similarly, it is better to take all the guests who come to our country for various jobs to the place and show them and make them a part of the process. For example, the African Economic Conference, the African Security Conference, the China-Africa Forum, the India-Africa Forum, the Russia-Africa Forum, the Europe-Africa Forum, the America-Africa Forum, the African Young Leaders Forum, the African Media Leaders Forum, the African Women Leaders Summit, as well as the African Ruling Parties Forum. If we take it and make it happen at the academy, it will allow us to travel halfway to our dream.