

**Welcoming Speech for the Alemayans Class of 1985
40th Anniversary Celebration January 17, 2025**

Dear brothers and sisters of the Alemayans Class of 1985,(currently known as Haramaya University)

Distinguished guests, beloved mentors, and dear friends,

Today is truly a special and historic day for all of us.

It is a day on which we proudly gather—from **the United States in North America; from Switzerland and Germany in Europe; from South Africa, Zambia, and Nigeria; and from our beloved motherland, Ethiopia,** representing all regional states—**Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, Harari, Somali, Sidama, Gurage, Wolayita,** and many others.

As the chairman of the Alemayans Class of 1985, it is my great honor and privilege to warmly welcome you all to this **40th Anniversary Celebration.** Today, we come together as **proud sons and daughters of Alemaya/ Haramaya University,** united by the spirit of brotherhood, solidarity, and shared excellence in Agricultural Sciences. We stand here as true Alemayans—committed to unity, service, excellence, and love for our country.

In humble reverence and with hearts full of thanksgiving, we begin by praising and glorifying the Almighty God, the source of all grace and wisdom. We give thanks for His unfailing love, divine guidance, and protective hand that has sustained us throughout our life and this forty-years journey.

Distinguished guests, beloved mentors, and dear friends,

Over the past four decades, members of our class have served Ethiopia and the global community in some of the **most challenging and demanding environments**—from the harsh climates of **Gambella, and Pawi,** to pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in **Afar, Somali, and in Borana and Bale lowlands of Oromia region.**

We served our nation as dedicated agriculturalists, researchers, extension workers, planners, finance officers, development practitioners, and leaders—standing shoulder to shoulder with farming and pastoral communities.

Many of our classmates made outstanding contributions in **agricultural research and extension**. Our friends at the **Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR)** developed and disseminated improved crop varieties—most notably **new teff varieties**—enabling farmers to **double productivity** and significantly improve livelihoods across the country.

Others among us served Ethiopia in **good governance and political leadership**, namely, Mr. Beyene G., Dr. Mamaru Tsadiqu, Mr. Degarege Seyum, Mr. Feleke, and many others rising to senior levels of responsibility and contributing to national development, institutional reform, and public service.

Today, we also proudly recognize four of our classmates who are serving as **professors in world-renowned universities**:

Professor Zerihun Tadele who is a Group Leader of Crop Breeding and Genomics Section at the Institute of Plant Sciences, **University of Bern, Switzerland**,

Professor Yali Edessa is a Professor and Department head in the Department of Civil Engineering at the **Central University of Technology, in South Africa**.

Ass. Professor Zelalem Eshete at **George Mason University** at the **Department of Mechanical Engineering** in the United States, and

Ass. Professor Daniel Fikresilassie of Mechanical Engineering at Addis Ababa University.

These distinguished scholars represent the finest fruits of Alemaya. We salute and applaud them for their continued global contributions to science, education, and humanity.

We also proudly acknowledge **Dr. Melaku Ayele**, a distinguished Principal Scientist, Molecular breeder in **International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria** and guest lecturer at several Nigerian and Ethiopian universities. His contributions to international agricultural research are a source of pride not only for him, but for the entire Alemayans Class of 1985.

Our appreciation further extends to many others who have served with distinction in international organizations, including

Dr. Lema Gizachew at UN-FAO in Ethiopia and South Sudan;

Dr. Woldeyesus Senebo, at **African Union Development Agency-NEPAD** (based in Kampala and Nairobi);

Dr. Mosisa Worku a maize seed system specialist at **CIMMYT's Global Maize Program** based in Nairobi, Kenya;

Dr. Ashebir Sewalem, in US

Dr. Solomon Abegaz Senior Researcher at the **Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute**

Dr. Habtemariam Kasa at **ILRI in Addis Ababa**, who served as director and project coordinator.

Dr. Kidane ... Deputy Director in EIAR.

Among us are also **renowned consultants and entrepreneurs**, including:

Mr. Teshome Afrasa, my best friend as well as my strongest competitor in the consultancy services. He has provided consultancy services on national turnkey projects in Ethiopia financed by multilateral and bilateral organizations. He extended his company service abroad and worked in Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Uganda, South Sudan.

Dr. Aleign Kefyalew is another prominent consultant working for a company in US.

Dr. Elias Zerfu is also working as freelance consultant for international organizations.

Our humble friend Mr. Temam Ababulgu is also working as an entrepreneur involving in agriculture and mining sector of the economy. And, **Mr. Yohannis Sefere** in agriculture sector.

I, too, have been privileged to contribute to this sector by establishing enterprises in the consultancy and hospitality industries, creating employment opportunities for many young and dynamic professionals, and working extensively across all regional states of Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti and Somaliland.

Overall, We are proud Alamayans today, creating jobs for hundreds of young professionals Ethiopian as entrepreneurs and contributing to Ethiopia's GDP.

We are equally proud of our classmates serving as **leaders in international and national NGOs**, including

Mr.Jemal Ahmed who worked in ActionAid International as Head of Africa Region, in Addis Ababa, Nairobi/Kenya and Pakistan,

Dr. Dereje Adugna worked for a number of international NGOs in Sudan, Zambia, Kenya, Uganda,

Ms.Yewudar Hailu (Director in several INGOs),

Dr. Bayush Tsegaye,

Mr.Haftu Woldu,

Mr.Zealbo Asfawosen,

Mr.Gezahagn Alemu(Finland Embassy and JICA), and

Mr.Afewerk Hailu (Wetland Ethiopia),

over all, they engaged in civil society organizations leadership and community development and continued to serve vulnerable communities with dedication and compassion at both local and global levels.

Of course, our friends **Mr. Jemal Hassen, Mr. Samuel Teshome and Mis. Etagegn Bekele** were working in the **banking industry**, where they prepared, appraised, and financed business plans in agricultural and manufacturing industries in Ethiopia.

Distinguished guests, beloved mentors, and dear friends,

We are also immensely proud that members of the **Alemayans Class of 1985** are making remarkable contributions in the **modern digital era**, particularly in **Artificial Intelligence, information technology, and digital transformation.**

We proudly recognize **Dr. Mulu Ayele, a Principal Scientist and Senior Consultant - Biotech, Agri and Pharma Industries in US,**

Dr. Adugna Kebede, and Mr. Asefa Chaka, who are working in advanced AI and IT fields in the United States, serving both U.S. government institutions and leading private companies.

Mr. Tamirat Tadesse, working on Basic Digital Skills training resource development in Addis Ababa.

Overall, Their excellence and leadership in these cutting-edge fields demonstrate that the Alemayans Class of 1985 is not only rooted in agriculture and development, but is also **actively shaping the future of digitalization and innovation** in the modern world.

In addition, we proudly acknowledge Mr. **Asefa Teferi, Mr. Kebede Mengistu, Mr. Kedir Geremew, and Mr. Abdi Hasen** who are serving in **various departments of the United States Government**, and Mr. **Zeru Gashaw** in Germany.

Their professionalism, competence, and integrity stand as powerful testimony to the **global competitiveness, credibility, and excellence** of the Alemayans Class of 1985 in highly demanding public service environments.

These achievements affirm that our class continues to contribute meaningfully—**from agriculture to artificial intelligence, from rural communities to advanced digital systems, and from national service to global governance.**

Dear Alemayan class of 85 friends,

Overall, the **immense contributions of the Alemayans Class of 1985** stand as a powerful example for generations to come. Today, we celebrate these **40 years of achievement**—not only to honor our past, **but to reaffirm our collective commitment** to remain role models, mentors, and servants of society in the years ahead.

In Remembrance

As we celebrate, we also pause to remember, with deep respect and gratitude, **our beloved classmates and beloved academic Dean Dr. Azage Tegegn and our other teachers in Alemaya college of Agriculture who are no longer with us today.** Though they are absent in body, they remain forever present in our hearts, our memories, and our shared history.

May their souls rest in eternal peace.

May their legacy continue to inspire us.

On this historic occasion, we are also deeply honored to recognize **our beloved and respected mentors** who shaped our lives. Among them, we are privileged to have with us **His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Mengistu Huluka**, former Dean of Alemaya College of Agriculture, and **Professor Galana Amente**, former Student Dean and our Freshman Physics instructor. And Ms. Alemshet WoldAmanuel, the wife of the late Dr. Beyene Chichaybelu.

Forty years ago, Ambassador Dr. Mengistu Huluka was not only our College Dean—he was truly a **father figure** to all of us. Through his exemplary leadership, academic guidance, kindness, and visionary outlook, he inspired an entire generation. The seeds you sowed in us have grown into productive, world-influencing fruits—serving **Ethiopia, Africa, Europe, North America, and Australia**. For this enduring legacy, we say: **thank you**.

Our special gratitude also goes to **Professor Galana Amente**, whose humility, mentorship, and compassion left a lasting imprint on our lives. He guided us through challenges, advised and consoled us, and mentored us not only to be better students, but better citizens. He dined with us at the student cafeteria, sharing the common shiro wot and “therefore wot,” sitting among us and tasting the same meals we ate—an expression of his humility, warmth, and genuine affection. He played basketball with us—not as a distant authority, but as a teammate—teaching us camaraderie, discipline, and respect. In Freshman Physics, he taught us ***Mechanics, Thermodynamics, Electromagnetism and Newton’s laws***, but more importantly, he taught us **how to confront and overcome the challenges of life**. Those lessons laid the foundation for our life journey.

Today, we honor Professor Galana as a representative and enduring symbol of our remaining teachers and academic staff of the Alemaya College of Agriculture.

Thank you, Professor Galana Amente.

Today, we also honor **in absentia** the late **Dr. Beyene Chichaybelu**, our commander during the 1985 Gambella Resettlement Campaign. His fatherly care, stamina, love, and affection for his students remain vivid in our hearts. His familiar call—“***Lijoche!***”—still echoes in our minds. Though he is not physically with us, **his spirit is present among us today**. **Rest in eternal peace, Dr. Beyene Chichaybelu. Your legacy lives on.**

Finally, I extend my sincere gratitude to all my beloved brothers and sisters of the Alemayans Class of 1985 who dedicated time, resources, and unwavering commitment to make this celebration a reality.

Special appreciation goes to Dr. Melaku Ayele for developing a beautiful and dedicated website for our class, which we are pleased to launch shortly.

The Alemayans Class of 1985 website is more than a platform for communication; it is a digital monument that chronicles four decades of shared achievements, enduring bonds, brotherhood, unity, excellence, and legacy. It also lays a strong foundation for our unwavering commitment to continued service to our country and the global community.

I also extend my heartfelt thanks to our beloved brother Mr. Asefa Teferi for his generosity, humility, inspiring spirit, and the beautiful, deeply moving poems he has shared with us everyday over the past two years. He composed and organized a special song dedicated to Alemaya, which we will joyfully sing together in a few moments.

This song stands as yet another lasting monument created by Mr. Asefa Teferi. It will endure through time and continue to be sung by present and future generations of Haramayans, representing a profound and meaningful contribution to Haramaya University.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to my dear brother Dr. Mulu Ayele for leading the anniversary program with outstanding excellence and for meticulously engineering every detail of the event.

I also extend my sincere gratitude to Professor Zerihun Tadele for his unwavering communication and consistent engagement with all of us.

In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Dereje Adugna for his original initiative in bringing us together and for laying the foundation that made today's event possible.

Special thanks go to our local Task Force member, Mr. Teshome Afrasa, for shouldering significant responsibility and, despite his busy schedule, effectively coordinating and organizing the logistics for this event.

I also extend my sincere appreciation to Mr. Jemal Ahmed, Mr. Tamirat Tadesse, Dr. Elias Zerfu, Dr. Solomon Abegaz, Mr. Jemal Hassen, and Dr. Woldeyesus Sinebo for their active participation in the Task Force and their strong commitment to organizing this event.

Overall, I would like to sincerely thank all my friends who generously contributed their financial support, making this anniversary celebration truly beautiful and radiant.

With the highest respect and deep appreciation, I extend my sincere gratitude to our distinguished guests: Professor Belay Kassa, former President of Haramaya University; Professor Tassew Woldehanna, former President of Addis Ababa University; Professor Fikre

Lemessa, former President of Jimma University; and Professor Nigussie Dechassa, current Director of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research.

I am also profoundly thankful to Professor Assefa, Prof. Demel Teketel, Dr. Mandafro Nigusse, Dr. Assefa Admase, Dr. Eyilachew, Dr. Abebe Fanta, and Dr. Alemu Yami and Mr. Mulugeta Assefa for graciously sacrificing your valuable time, traveling from near and far, and honoring us with your presence, which added great dignity and grace to this event.

I extend my appreciation to all friends who shared valuable opinions and constructive ideas, contributing meaningfully to the success of this celebration.

Finally, I am proud to announce that the Alemayans Class of 1985 will donate a meaningful amount of cash after this anniversary event to support one or two disability and orphanage centers in Addis Ababa, reaffirming our shared commitment to service and social responsibility.

On behalf of the Alemayans Class of 1985, I thank you all for your service, your friendship, and your unwavering dedication.

Long live the Alemayans Class of 1985.

Long live Haramaya.

Long live Ethiopia.

Thank you.

Kejela Gemtessa (PhD)

President, Alemayans Class of 1985

January 17, 2026

Addis Ababa