

**Speech by Mr. Yared Mola,
President, Association of Ethiopian Insurers &
Chairman, Local Organizing Committee**

Welcoming Cocktail Dinner speech

Good evening, everyone!

On behalf of the Local Organizing Committee, allow me to warmly welcome you to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia—where the skies are high, the smiles are wide, and the food comes with a warning label marked: “spicy but unforgettable!”

Let me start with a little surprise...

Today, you are time travelers!

Yes, you heard me right. In Ethiopia, it's May 17, 2017. That's not a typo—that's our calendar! So congratulations, my friends—you are officially 8 years younger. Please enjoy the youthful energy while it lasts. (Just don't try using it to renegotiate your insurance premiums—we've seen that clause before!)

Let me also take this opportunity to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to the 51st AIO Conference and Annual General Meeting. We are beyond thrilled to have you all here. And allow me to offer a special congratulations—together, you have helped Ethiopia break a 53-year record in the history of AIO! With over 1,900 participants from 93 countries, this is officially the largest and most globally diverse gathering in AIO history. So yes, you're part of insurance history already—no claim form needed!

Ethiopia is a land of stories, spirit, and serious coffee. Our meals are shared from the same plate—because food here isn't just about eating, it's about belonging. And tonight, as you bite into your first injera or dare to taste the legendary doro wat, remember: this isn't dinner, it's an adventure.

And one very important tip: we Ethiopians don't use forks to eat injera—we use our hands. Yes, our fingers are the original utensils! So roll up those sleeves and dive in the Ethiopian way. Just think of it as underwriting with your fingertips—messy, precise, and deeply satisfying!

Now a word of caution: if the berbere (our spice mix) makes your eyes water, don't worry—we have insurance! (Though the claims adjuster might need a fire

extinguisher.) And if the tej, our honey wine, makes you dance, then you're doing Ethiopia right.

We Ethiopians have a saying: "Yichalal"—everything is possible. Tonight, anything is possible—including the chance that you'll fall in love... with our cuisine, our culture, or maybe even our weather. (We ordered the perfect breeze just for you—it's not in the policy, but we're happy to endorse it!)

And speaking of time travel—Addis Ababa is also home to Lucy, the oldest human ancestor ever discovered—3.2 million years old, resting just a few kilometers from here. So while you're exploring the future of insurance, don't forget to also discover the past of humanity, right here in Lucy's own city.

This ancient land is undergoing a glittering transformation—a city of ancient roots and modern rhythms. So whether you came for networking or nostalgia, for panels or pastries, Addis has something for you.

This week is about big ideas and bold discussions—but tonight is about friendship, laughter, and making memories that outlast the panels and the PowerPoints.

So relax, eat well, get a little spicy, dance if you feel like it, and enjoy your journey not only to Ethiopia, but back in time.

Welcome to Addis. Welcome to Ethiopia. Welcome home.

Thank you—and enjoy the evening!