

## PRESS RELEASE

### Circus Stakeholders Urged for Official Recognition, Policy Support

#### *Participants Proposed Formation of a National Circus Association*

Thursday 11 July 2018 | Addis Ababa – A consultative forum that aims to advocate for an official recognition and policy support for the circus sector in Ethiopia was held today at the Addis Ababa City Hall Theater and Cultural Center.

The forum, entitled “**Successes, Challenges, and Prospects of Circus in Ethiopia**”, ensemble senior officials of the federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism; Culture and Tourism bureaus’ heads of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa city administrations, and of the four regional states; as well as circus clubs, circus professionals, renowned figures, and relevant stakeholders across the nation.

The circus industry and the number of clubs in Ethiopia registered a remarkable growth during the past 25 years, where the sector has offered exposure opportunities for talented young people, adorned public shows and events, helped to boost the national image, and contributed its share to the national economy through growing employments and income.

The forum was organized by SELAM ETHIOPIA – an international, non-government, and non-for-profit organization that operates in Ethiopia and other countries to create an enabling environment for cultural growth. SELAM ETHIOPIA is currently implementing a three-year project – Culture Leads the Way (CLtW) – in Addis Ababa and four regional states to strengthen and advance the participation of culture actors in the development process through different forms of cultural expressions.

In particular to circus, SELAM ETHIOPIA has been undertaking a series of assessments and dialogues focused on Ethiopian circus in parallel with capacity building supports to four circus clubs operating in Amhara, Tigray, and South Nations Nationalities Peoples states as part of its CLtW project.

The outcome of these assessments and discussions indicated that there are a lot of constraints hampering the growth of the sector, which can’t be addressed through short-term capacity building supports and specific assistances.

More importantly, awareness gaps about the sector’s potential in generating wealth and employments, and the resulting absence of any governmental institution with an official mandate to look after the sector, is identified as the major impediment that negatively impacted the sector.

In addition to the aforementioned, challenges faced by the various players in the sector include:

- Poor understanding among government entities and the public at large about the circus profession and its potential to contribute to economic development;
- Inability on the part of circus clubs to engage in an organized approach, such as through forming an association to advocate their collective interests and enhance their bargaining power;
- Absence of any form of policy and strategy to direct the sector’s development;
- Lack of required inputs, advanced technology use, and skill upgrading trainings to sector actors;

Participants of the forum have discussed on mechanisms to alleviate the aforementioned challenges and other pertinent issues in general, where many have underlined about the importance of forming a national association of the circus sector to push their agenda in a coherent manner.

**Teshome Wondimu, Executive Director of Selam Ethiopia, said:-**

*“As an organization committed to unleash the growth of the Ethiopian culture sector, including the circus industry, we are glad to see a number of issues straightened out at today’s forum. SELAM ETHIOPIA shall continue its legacy of supporting the Ethiopian circus sector in capacity building, finance, and material as it has been doing for the last 25 years.”*

**Note to Editors:-**

SELAM is an international, non government, and non-for-profit organization established in Sweden in 1997.

SELAM is committed to create an enabling environment for cultural growth that shall contribute to economic, political, and social development.

SELAM, through its country office SELAM ETHIOPIA, is a reputed name in the culture sector for:

- **Catalyzing Sectoral Transformation** through advocacy and engagement of relevant stakeholders, where we organized hundreds of networking and advocacy platforms – dubbed **Selam Cultural Forum** – a series of continual events for the last 10 years, with each edition focusing on a specific thematic topic in culture
- **Facilitating Cross-Cultural Exchange** mainly through organizing music festivals in Ethiopia, Sweden, Cuba, and other countries while providing opportunities and exposure to emerging artists and performers – our flagship annual music concert **Selam Festival Addis** is a testament
- **Brokering Knowledge** via capacity building trainings by highly qualified international professionals to upgrade skills of Ethiopian musicians, sound engineers, artists, film makers, and professionals

SELAM ETHIOPIA is currently implementing a three-year project – **Culture Leads the Way (CLtW)** – in Addis Ababa and four regional states that aim to strengthen and advance the participation of culture actors in the development processes through different forms of cultural expressions, including this edition of **Selam Cultural Forum**.

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