



July 27, 2015

Her Excellency Ambassador Patricia Haslasch
The Ambassador of United States of America
Entoto Street, P.O. Box 1014
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Dear Madam Ambassador:

We are writing this letter as a follow up to a request Congressman Chris Van Hollen made, on our behalf, for an opportunity to meet with you and Mrs. Tanya Cole, the US Commercial Service Officer. We kindly request the meeting, during our trip to Ethiopia, from August 6 to 21st, 2015. We wish to present our Diaspora driven projects and programs, listed below, which we developed to advance US-Africa trade.

First, we are proud to inform you that the White House, in 2012, recognized our efforts and honored us, among other 14 leaders in American Diaspora communities with roots in the Horn of Africa, as Champions of Change. The awardees are helping to build stronger neighborhoods in communities and are working to mobilize networks across borders to address global challenges. We are also encouraged Congressman Mike Honda, Chair of the Congressional Ethiopian-American Caucus, recognized Blessed Coffee, Benefit Corporation, US-Africa Diaspora Business Council & in his speech to the US Congress, on Tue. July 21, the eve of President Obama's trip to Ethiopia.

1. Blessed Coffee, a pioneering socially responsible business model for US-Ethiopia trade, we have conceived, developed and introduced, which is geared towards development in coffee growing regions as well as in communities in the US where Blessed Coffee is sold.
2. US-Africa Diaspora Business Council (USADBC), the organization we founded and launched in 2014 that aims to present the Blessed Coffee model as a vital business model that can inspire the US-African diaspora business community to follow suit and establish similar businesses that advance US-Africa cultural and economic ties for development in Africa, and here in our American communities. USADBC aims to provide information, build capacity and infrastructure for the growing US-African Diaspora Business Communities. In June 2014, USADBC held its first Annual US-Africa Diaspora Business Forum and printed high-end color magazine and distributed it to the US-African Diaspora Communities nation. The pdf version is uploaded on our website (www.usadbc.org)
3. Benefit Corporation (B-Corp) for Africa Initiative, a yearlong promotional campaign that is comprised of several high profile public events, such as National Press Club Press Conference, a Briefing for African Diplomats in Washington DC and AU officials in Addis Ababa and a US Congressional Briefing, which will be co-sponsored by Congressman Mike Honda and Congressman Chris Van Hollen.

B-Corp is a pioneering business structure, first legislated by the state of Maryland in 2009. B-Corp businesses seek to produce positive material impact on society and the environment while creating wealth and profit. The B-Corp for Africa Initiative is developed in partnership with Council Fire, an organization recognized as a key advisor to businesses, non-profits and government organizations that are leading the way to a more sustainable world.

Our work and effort is inspired by the conviction we hold dearly that the US-African Diaspora, estimated to be over 3.5 million people, is a highly motivated economic force with massive potential to advance US-Africa trade and cultural ties with a positive developmental impact. Its growing economic base, civic engagement and cultural vitality are fast integrating into the US social and economic mosaic. It is a natural ally to support the much aspired vision of translating the aid based US-Africa relation to a trade based one that can help grow economic development in Africa and our communities in the US. Furthermore, the Blessed Coffee social business model, the US-Africa Diaspora Business Council, the B-Corp for Africa Initiative and the network, collaboration and partnership we are building are valuable to support the fulfillment of AGOA, reauthorized last month.

Last, we hope to seek your advice and the support of the US Embassy regarding our plan to open a branch office for the US-Africa Diaspora business Council in Addis Ababa. This office will work to promote US-Africa Trade by conducting business seminars, develop entrepreneurship workshops, and organize and promote tradeshows and missions to advance US-Africa Trade.

In this context, we seek your permission to bring to the meeting Mr. Tewodros Shiferaw, a self-made businessman based in Ethiopia, with an extensive business experience in Africa-China trade, is a founder Rosetta Trading, a multi-million dollar company with investments in real estate, import-export trade and Microfinance. Mr. Shiferaw has expressed appreciation for the Benefit Corporation and investment support for our social business model. The purpose of our trip to Ethiopia is to meet with Mr. Shiferaw and his staff to finalize the partnership agreement, that will assist US-Africa Diaspora Business Council open business in Ethiopia, and invigorate their microfinance programs support to community enterprises we will recruit to join our B-Corp for Africa Initiative. Mr. Shiferaw is the invited guest of honor at our Second Annual US-Africa Diaspora Business Forum, planned for October 17, 2015.

It is deeply gratifying to earn, the recognition of Congressional leaders, build partnerships with like-minded organizations, earn the support of the US-Africa Diaspora community and the confidence of the a successful businessman. We are confident the additional leadership and assistance we seek from you and your staff will further enable us to realize our ultimate objectives.

In closing, we extend our gratitude for your support in advance and remain hopeful you will grant us the opportunity to meet with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Tebabu Assefa & Sara Mussie (Husband & wife team)
Co-founders, Virtuous Exchange / Blessed Coffee
Co-founders, US-Africa Diaspora Business Council
Chief Organizers, Annual Ethiopian Festival in Silver Spring

Enclosed:

B-Corp for Africa concept Outline
Blessed Coffee, Concept Brief
US-Africa Diaspora Business Council



Blessed Coffee Business Mode/Brand Development Brief

I. Company Description:

1) Blessed Coffee (BC), from the farmer to the cup:

BC is based on the philosophy, "from the farmer to your cup", is established as a socially responsible business and trade geared towards development in coffee growing regions as well as in communities in the US where Blessed coffee is sold.



BC is established to connect the small coffee farmers with the specialty coffee consumer in the US market and shares profit to support the Farmer's Union social program opening schools, health clinics, safe water wells and other social programs in the coffee-growing region. By working with Ethiopian coffee cooperatives and directly with 254,000 small farmers that have a stake in BC's success, BC brings light to the rich Ethiopian coffee tradition and introduces premium grade, shade grown, organic Ethiopian coffees. Getting the coffee directly from the farmers and bypassing several middle agents provides a bigger profit margin for coffee growers.

2) BC is the Nation's second Benefit Corporation:

The significance and common good of the founding philosophy was recently confirmed through the enactment of the "Benefit Corporation," a new legislation signed into law in April 2010 in the state of Maryland. The first of its kind in the



nation it is a hybrid of for-profit and nonprofit models that aims for community benefits as well as profits.

BC is the second company to be registered under the Benefit Corporation law. BC's model is more than compelling; it resonates at multiple levels: the desire for the very best, the appeal of culture as well as the aspiration to produce common good for farmers in Ethiopia and communities in the US.

High value profit sharing arrangements and BC's long standing association with the small coffee

growers secures its access to the highest grade of beans in regions renowned for producing the world's finest coffees. The same arrangements guarantee that quality is maintained in each step of the logistics chain – including 18 quality control checks during the crucial sorting and washing processes. The result is a branded product with a discernable difference in both taste and consistency.

BC is introduced as an alternative business model to the African community in the US, to encourage them to follow suit and establish businesses that advance US-Africa cultural and economic ties for development in Africa, and here in our American communities.



As BC grows and expands its market share and variety of supply, small coffee farmers from other cooperative unions in Ethiopia and other African countries will establish a business relationship with other small coffee farmers in Ethiopia and other African coffee growing countries.

The founders of Blessed Coffee are a recipient of “Champion of Change” from the White House for social activism and the work, which resulted the foundation of Blessed Coffee.

II. The Genesis, the founding story:

In 2002, in Washington, DC, Tebabu Assefa met Mr. Tadesse Meskela, the founder and manager of the Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (OCFCU) at a forum organized by Oxfam International and Global Exchange to draw publicity to a campaign designed to bring awareness to the coffee crisis. Mr. Meskela introduced Mr. Assefa to the world of coffee, the growing tradition, the history of the farmer's cooperatives union, the global coffee business and the challenge the farmers faces as they strive to get a better price for coffee.

Mr. Assefa, who has had an extensive educational and professional experience promoting and marketing Culture and Arts, was inspired by the small farmers' collective effort to bargain for a better price in the global market. But he was also baffled by the unfairness of the market and was highly motivated to develop a promotional campaign to create market awareness for the culture of coffee and share the story of the farmers with coffee connoisseurs and specialty coffee consumer in the US market. Mr. Assefa traveled to Ethiopia several times to visit the coffee-growing region where he met with coffee growers and their cooperatives. He learned first hand the impact of the coffee crisis on the lives of the small coffee farmers. This led to a six-year market research that immediately revealed that the global market access challenges the coffee farmers face is also true for other value chains in the agricultural sector and in the end it hinders Ethiopia's global market participation.



The research sought advice from policymakers, including US Congress members, the Ethiopia's Ministry of Trade and Industry and other trade related governmental and NGO officials. Survey methods included face-to-face interviews with Ethiopian coffee farmers' cooperative unions, small to large-scale Ethiopian manufacturers and Ethiopian businesses and community leaders at home and in the Diaspora. Prominent scholars and experts in the field of international finance, economics, trade and marketing provided critical analysis and inputs.

III. Vision:

Produce, grow, sustain and inspire duplication of a value chain that connects the small growers, producers and community-based enterprises in Africa with the end global consumer.

Offer Dynamic Investment & Ownership (DIO) and provide Access to profit sharing (APS) to small growers, producers and community-based enterprises in Africa with the end global consumer.

IV. Products and Services:

Blessed Coffee introduces its line of Ultra-Premium Coffee. Organic, Single Origin, Forest Grown from Ethiopia, the farmers who are the expert of coffee growing tradition, the altitude, the soil and the climate for producing truly outstanding coffee combine to ensure supreme balances between good body, strong aromatics and fine acidity.

V. Community Giveback:

BC, at its inauguration, announced it would develop a Community Benefit Fund (CBF) and provide Access to Profit Sharing (APS), which will be implemented on two levels. First, through the CBF, BC will allocate 50% of the net profits from the retail cafe revenue to support the twenty community based organizations in the greater Silver Spring-Takoma Park area that are engaged in social, economic and cultural development.

Furthermore, BC aims to provide additional Access to Profit Sharing to community organizations/enterprises through BC's Community Based Sales (CBS) strategy, developed to replace the sales through the traditional big grocery chains like wholefood. Through the BC promotional campaign, our community is encouraged to purchase our coffee selections directly from the community organization they wish to support. BC then will make the coffee available for pick up at the community organizations and shares 25% of the gross sales with the community organization. This is designed to keep the sales commission, usually passed to traditional big groceries, in the community, to fuel community social and economic development.

VI. Brand Development & Growth:

1. BC, since its inauguration in 2011, has introduced its social business model, sampled/sold coffee at community festivals, farmers markets and faith-based centers.

2. BC received a Citation from the General Assembly of the State of Maryland and Governor Martin O'Malley, at the Blessed Coffee's inauguration address, said of the business that it, "stands at the intersection of profits & social responsibility.

3. The White House gave us "Champion of Change" recognition, which honors ordinary Americans who are doing extraordinary things in their communities to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world.

4. Edible DC, a Washington DC food magazine, featured Blessed Coffee, on a cover, as one of 16 "Game Changers" in the local sustainable food sector. Other print and TV news media including, the Washington Post, the Gazette and CCTV America (Chinese state TV) have reported on the BC concept and story.

5. Congresswoman Karen Bass, ranking member of the subcommittee on Africa, the US Foreign Affairs, an advocate for robust sustainable US & Africa trade and investment, invited Blessed Coffee to participate, at the 2013 Annual Africa Braintrust Conference.

6. US Senator Ben Cardin mentioned Blessed Coffee in a keynote address at the USAID Small Business Conference on May 2013. And, Congressman Chris Van Hollen wrote a letter, on our behalf, to the USAID to invite senior officials to meet with us review Blessed Coffee and provide feedback and support.

7. The founders of Blessed Coffee are awarded the "2014 Social Entrepreneurs of the Year" award at the 2014 StartupAfrica Award Gala on September 29, 2014.

8. Congressman Mike Honda, Chair of the Congressional Ethiopian-American Caucus, recognized Blessed Coffee, Benefit Corporation, US-Africa Diaspora Business Council & in his speech to the US Congress, on Tue. July 21, 2015, the eve of President Obama's trip to Ethiopia.



US-Africa Diaspora Business Council (USADBC) & US-Africa Diaspora Business Forum
Advancing the US-Africa trade relation and cultural exchange through Diaspora engagements.

USADBC, founded and launched in 2014, USADBC aims to present the Blessed Coffee model as a vital business model that can inspire the US-African diaspora business community to follow suit and establish similar businesses that advance US-Africa cultural and economic ties for development in Africa, and here in our American communities. USADBC aims to provide information, build capacity and infrastructure for the growing US-African Diaspora Business Communities. In June 2014, USADBC held its first Annual US-Africa Diaspora Business Forum and printed high-end color magazine and distributed it to the US-African Diaspora Communities nation.



Mission:

US-ADBC is conceived and developed to provide information, build capacity and developmental infrastructure of the growing US-African diaspora business community.

- The growing US Africa diaspora businesses it production, marketing, distribution infrastructure, and its purchasing / investment power can directly contribute to the economic development of small enterprises in Africa, with impact to the US - Africa trade relations.
- The US-African diaspora business community could open opportunity for US businesses that have potential and interest to enter the emerging African market. This will encourage US businesses and maximizes investment opportunities.
- US-African diaspora is well positioned and highly motivated to provide leadership and grow the US-Africa investment and transfer of knowledge and appropriate US technology to Africa.

Objectives:

- Facilitate a dialog between African diaspora businesses and County, Sate and Federal economic development and US-Africa trade/investment related agencies.
- Foster a dialogue between the African diaspora business community and US Business with potential and interest to enter the merging African market.
- Celebrate the growth US-African diaspora business in the US and recognize and profile successful US-African diaspora businesses leaders.