



In Celebration of Bob Marley's 60th Birthday

AFRICA UNITE



PRESS

A QUARTER OF A MILLION PEOPLE EXPECTED FOR BOB MARLEY COMMEMORATIVE CONCERT

Addis Ababa, 29 December – More than a quarter of a million people are expected to fill historic Meskel Square in Addis Ababa on 6 February 2005 for a 10 hour concert celebrating the 60th birthday of legendary reggae singer, Bob Marley.

The concert, with performances by the Marley family, I-Three and African superstars like Angélique Kidjo, a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, among others, will be part of *Africa Unite*, an unprecedented month-long celebration in the Ethiopian capital commemorating the late beloved reggae superstar. The Bob Marley and Rita Marley Foundations are partnering with the Government of Ethiopia, the City Government of Addis Ababa, the African Union, the World Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to make the month one to remember with a symposium, art and photo exhibitions, a film festival and other live music events.

This is the first time that the birthday celebrations, organized annually by the Marley family since his passing in 1981, are being held outside of Jamaica.

“We decided to host the *Africa Unite* Celebration in Ethiopia because this was Bob Marley's vision. He claimed Ethiopia as his home and the time is fitting for his return. I am proud that the Ethiopian Government and partners have responded so positively,” said Nana Rita Marley, the late singer's widow.

Bob Marley first visited Ethiopia, the spiritual home of the Rastafari faith, in 1979. “What he told me when he came back was, ‘wow – I can't wait to go back to Ethiopia!’” recalls Nana Rita Marley. “He wasn't the Bob Marley then that he is today. So he came in a humble, low profile way. Twenty-three years after his passing this is the best thing we could do for him, for us to say, ‘rise up, Bob, in Ethiopia.’ That is major. Bob says, ‘Africa Unite, Unite for the benefit of our people. Unite for the benefit of our children. Unite because it is later that you think. It is time for the unification of all Africans.’”



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Africa Unite will showcase Addis Ababa as the capital of Africa and seat of the African Union. “The essence of Ethiopia being the capital of Africa should be underlined very strongly – and we see this as one event that will really put accent on that fact that this is the home of the African Union and what we do here reverberates across the rest of Africa,” said Professor Margaret Vogt, Director of Cabinet of the African Union Commission.

Ethiopian partner organizations are upgrading infrastructure and services to ensure that the series of events run smoothly. Teams of workers are currently resurfacing historic Meskel Square, the venue for the birthday celebration, located in the heart of Addis Ababa.

“This is a special event for our city and its residents,” said Arkebe Oqubay, Mayor of the City of Addis Ababa. “Everyone is welcome to the Meskel Square to enjoy this historic concert. The City Government will cordon off specific areas of Meskel Square to accommodate families with children, the elderly and those who need special care. The City will also make special arrangement with the city bus service to ensure concert attendants have means of transportation late in to the evening.”

“Bob Marley put Ethiopia on a pedestal and it is an honour that the festival will take place in Ethiopia,” said Netsanet Asfaw, State Minister of Information. “Ethiopians have long been waiting for Bob Marley’s family to perform in Ethiopia and I would like to thank them.”

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Photographs are available upon request.



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