

ZIGSU-GONDAR MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHINA-ETHIOPIA/ AFRICA LAW RESEARCH AND
TRAINING CENTRE

Dr. Asrat Atsedwoyene Andargie, Academic Vice-President of Gondar University and Dr. Abebe Assefa, Dean of the School of Law, recently travelled from Gondar in Ethiopia to Hangzhou to seal a historic agreement that will shepherd in a deep and lasting new institutional relationship. On 15 January 2018, at a ceremony chaired by ZIGSU Vice-President Dai Wenzhan, Vice-Chancellor Asrat and Professor Chen Shou-Can, President of ZIGSU, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which also established the China-Ethiopia / African Legal Research and Training Centre.



The signing of the MOU between Gondar University and ZIGSU

In his commemorative address, President Chen pointed out that China and Africa have a long tradition of friendship and are closely linked in political, economic, legal and cultural fields. Under the framework of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, China-Africa exchanges have witnessed fruitful results, not least the university's hosting of a delegation of African legal professionals last year. The China-Ethiopia/African Legal Research and Training Centre will surely strengthen mutual cooperation in legal studies, legal services and the training of legal personnel and so boost the cooperation and friendship between China and Africa. Gondar's Academic Vice-President Dr. Asrat briefly introduced his institution to the attendees and emphasised the opportunities available and the total commitment of Gondar University to the cooperation agreement. Dr Asrat reviewed the history of exchanges between China and Africa and pointed out that the two universities will fully support the new Centre in accordance with the principles of mutual benefit and mutual trust. The MOU and the Centre will not only become the cornerstone of the cooperation between the two universities but also promote friendship among China and Africa

Also in attendance were the Dean of the ZJGSU School of Law and Intellectual Property, Professor Chen Linlin; ZJGSU's International Department Director, Ms. Tao Ying; Vice-Dean of the School of Law and Intellectual Property, Professor Song Jie; and the School of Law and Intellectual Property's Professor Hu Minfei. The China Law Society is a strong supporter of Africa-China partnerships and played a major role in facilitating this development. In attendance and participating in the ceremony on behalf of the China Law Society were Senior Project Officer of the Outreach Department, Ms. Qi Meng and the Project Officer of the Outreach Department, Ms. Wei Lisha. Ms. Qi Meng shared a formal note of congratulations from the Chinese Law Society, expressing the hope that the two universities will build the research centre into a platform for joint research and creative thinking, share legal resources, enhance mutual understanding through legal training of Africans and Chinese, and contribute towards the development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The distinguished visitors from Gondar University also met with Law School members to develop the mechanics of closer collaboration pursuant to the MOU and the establishment of the Centre. Professor Chen Linlin, Dean of the School of Law and Intellectual Property, hosted the meeting and chaired a constructive discussion between Vice-Dean Song, Academic Vice-President Dr Asrat, Dean Abebe, and Professor Hu Minfei, with helpful contributions from the China Law Society's Ms Qi Meng. Professor Han Ning, Head of the Law School's International Students' Office, also attended.



Dean Abebe speaking at the Law School about his vision for the activities of the new collaborative Centre

In the near future, there will be annual international conferences showcasing comparative law expertise from China and African nations including Ethiopia, and making an important contribution to the Belt and Road Initiative's Africa-China implications. The two sides will start to collaborate on joint research projects, starting with handbooks on the legal systems of China and Ethiopia that will help the respective communities understand the Chinese and Ethiopian legal systems, and then using that as a foundation for more advanced collaboration. ZJGSU's Dean and Vice-Dean declared their commitment to exploring ways of promoting the teaching of Chinese in Ethiopia, and funding scholarships for the staff of Gondar University to study in China, ideally on

China-African legal issues which are the focus of the MOU and the Centre. Both sides expressed their commitment to immediate action in developing mutual knowledge bases, and discussed regular exchanges of staff for teaching purposes as well as developing joint degree programmes at post-graduate level. Both ZJGSU and Gondar University pledged to provide legal materials for developing the essential resources of the Centre, and facilitating research.

Having spent the morning meeting colleagues from the School of Statistics, Academic Vice-President Dr. Asrat and Dean Abebe devoted the afternoon of their second day in Hangzhou to delivering intensive and deeply insightful lectures for Law School students. This is the first time our students have been able to learn at first hand from Ethiopian experts. Academic Vice-President Asrat introduced Ethiopia and spoke at length about Gondar and her historic university with a global presence.



Academic Vice-President Dr. Asrat addressing Law students

Dean Abebe spoke about the Ethiopian legal system, with emphasis on law making, the judiciary and the place of arbitration in the federal set-up of Ethiopia. In light of China's major role, he also spoke about the framework for investment for by foreigners, and the fiscal and non-fiscal incentives available to attract such investment. Participants asked about issues such as the rights of expatriate workers, Ethiopia's immigration laws, arbitration, foreign law firms working in the country and legal representation.

On the third day of their visit, Vice-Dean Song accompanied Academic Vice-President Dr. Asrat and Dean Abebe for a meeting with the leadership of the Brighteous Law Firm, one of the largest and most distinguished in Hangzhou. They shared insights about the legal systems in Ethiopia and China, dispute settlement, opportunities for foreign law firms, and the carrying out of academic research with impact and the potential to make a positive contribution towards developing legal systems in both countries.



A warm welcome and meaningful dialogue at the Brighteous Law Firm

The successful visit of Academic Vice-President Dr. Asrat and Dean Abebe, and the accompanying events and commitments, have been a major development in the evolution of our institution. This has marked the start of a deep and meaningful collaboration and friendship between institutions and individual scholars. It has also marked a new milestone in our journey of globalization and of mutual discovery about China-Africa issues.