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ETHIOPIAN FILMMAKERS EXPERIENCE AN AMAZING WEEK OF MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS, EDUCATION, SCREENINGS, SEMINARS AND SOIRÉES

INTERNATIONAL EMERGING FILM TALENT ASSOCIATION
AND THE ETHIOPIAN FILM INITIATIVE
SPONSOR FILMMAKERS IN MONACO AND CANNES TO GREAT SUCCESS

ACTOR BILLY ZANE ON HAND TO MENTOR THE FILMMAKERS
AND JOINS IEFTA ADVISORY BOARD

ADDIS ABABA / MONACO / CANNES – 31 May, 2012 – Three talented young Ethiopian Filmmakers just finished a once-in-a-lifetime experience when they spent a week in Monte Carlo and at the Cannes Film Festival, attending film screenings and premieres, participating in meetings, workshops, and seminars, and being feted at dinners and parties, and presenting their own work. Filmmakers **Henok Mebratu**, **Olisarali Olibui** and **Yidnekachew Shumete**, are participants of an educational program sponsored by **The International Emerging Film Talent Association (IEFTA) and the Ethiopian Film Initiative (EFI)**. The travel from Ethiopia was sponsored by **Ethiopian Airlines**.

Their experience began in Monte Carlo, the home base of the IEFTA, when they attended a Benefit Dinner in their honor at the beautiful Villa Nocturne hosted by IEFTA President Marco Orsini. Funders and supporters of the IEFTA and EFI program were on hand as well as members of the international press and film industry who came in from Cannes for the event and to meet the filmmakers. Actor Billy Zane (“*Titanic*”) flew in from the US to support the event and to serve as mentor for the filmmakers. At the event, Marco Orsini, President of the IEFTA announced that Mr. Zane has joined the organization’s Advisory Board. He also announced that in addition to the focus on Ethiopia (begun in 2008) and its filmmaking community, the IEFTA would also be broadening its educational outreach and support to include young emerging talent from other African nations.

The next day was spent in workshops, and meetings preparing the three for their trip to the Festival in Cannes where they were to meet the industry. Billy Zane and Producer Mitch Levine guided them through discussions, trial pitching sessions and filmmaking workshops. That evening at CREM in Monte Carlo, the filmmakers screened their short films, to the public, program supporters, and local Monaco media. Following the screenings Billy Zane led the three in a discussion of their work, their filmmaking

vision and the passion for their art, and commitment to the advancement of Ethiopia's – and Africa's – filmmaking community.

On to Cannes and the 65th Cannes Film Festival where the three were immersed in the industry. From morning to night they traversed the Festival, guided by Mitch Levine, meeting and speaking with industry professionals such as Co-Director of the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival Cameron Bailey and his team of programmers specializing in Africa; Film Fund representatives from France and Norway whose funding programs specifically benefit the filmmakers' region; Film Commissioners and Film Festival directors and programmers from Scandinavia, Europe, India, Canada, US and elsewhere to speak about co-production opportunities as well as presenting their work to the public; distributors and acquisition executives who explained what they were looking for from the global marketplace to bring to their countries and audiences; public relations and marketing executives, as well as journalists and many many others. They had numerous opportunities of networking and attending receptions – where the real work of the festival is done – and talked, met and mingled with the world's film industry.

“As a filmmaker from a developing country, I used to wonder how things worked in the developed world,” says Yidnekachew Shumete, “and this trip gave me the inside look and on how industry professionals operate and how I can best use this new knowledge in my career. It was magnificent! It will be interesting to see if things will be the same when I get back home?”

“I can simply say that these were the most efficient six days for my career,” says Henok Mebratu. “The experience has completely raised my confidence in the contexts of developing my work and pitching, selling, marketing and showing my films. Now, better knowing how the film industry works, I can upgrade my products to meet international standards.”

“This trip to Monaco and Cannes was very impressive,” states Olisarali Olibui. “I have travelled to a lot of festivals, but I have never seen this type of program with all the workshops, seminars, and meetings for a filmmaker. I have learned a lot about distribution, co-productions, etc. As an indigenous person - I can now be instrumental in helping other indigenous filmmakers. It was so amazing. I appreciate the EFI and IEFTA efforts - and for selecting my projects and me!! It was very strong work, and was much more than just an organized visit - but provided me with education, training and important contacts. I am looking forward to what the future will bring for this program and for me.”

Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael, a founding member of the EFI in Ethiopia, says, “I want to underline the unique opportunities brought to the Ethiopian filmmakers and the EFI by the Monaco and Cannes visit and that it is now up to them to pursue their contacts. This was a special new experience both for the filmmakers and myself and we all benefited. Billy Zane's participation and the commitment and kindness of the people working with IEFTA was so touching it has inspired me to work more to strengthen our common dream of the EFI. Meeting heads of institutions, film commissions, fund providers, film school directors and instructors and other different role players that can become EFI partners and help support in the creation of a film fund and/or a film school to benefit our emerging filmmakers was incredibly valuable.”

Henok Mebratu is an experienced filmmaker and a well-known figure among the Ethiopian creative community. His talents include directing documentaries and teaching media skills. In Cannes he will present a new movie drama he is working on. It will tell the story of Kidist and Dawit, who were both raised abroad and whose lives are completely transformed by coming back to Ethiopia to say farewell to their dying father.

Olisarali Olibui Tongolu co-produced an award-winning film, "Shooting with the Mursi", which gives an intriguing insider's view of his own tribe. In Cannes he will pitch his next project proposal "My Enemy, My Brother". Filming has already started on this project, which will focus on issues facing tribes

neighbouring the Mursi. The themes to be covered include uncontrolled tourism, climate change and land rights.

Yidnekachew Shumete Desalegn is a widely respected film director in Addis Ababa, as well as a cameraman, editor, teacher and scriptwriter. He has worked extensively in both the movie and documentary fields. His first feature film "Sirayet" in 2007 achieved widespread popularity. In Cannes he will pitch his upcoming film "Nishan" or Medal of Honour. It tells the story of Nishan, a young girl, who receives the rare opportunity of a visa to go abroad and change her life for the better. However, perplexing problems soon beset her.

The **EFI** provides capacity building support for Ethiopian documentary and feature film producers and directors as well as encouraging and training local and international entities to use local Ethiopian filmmakers. It also runs a website promoting Ethiopian film and Ethiopian filmmakers.

The **IEFTA** – through its Global Film Expression and partnerships with organizations such as the Ethiopian Film Initiative – is dedicated to the discovery, nurture and promotion of filmmakers throughout the developing world. The IEFTA has been supporting Emerging talent since 2006 and has been specifically supporting Ethiopian film since 2008.

The IEFTA and EFI form an international / Ethiopian / Swedish partnership committed to raising the professional standards of the Ethiopian film industry.

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