

Addis Tribune®

P.OBOX 2395, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

22 March 1999
Ms. Marjorie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
The Portals
445-12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Amendment of AfriSpace, Inc.'s Application for Authority to Construct, Launch and Operate a Subregional Africa and Middle Eastern Satellite Sound Broadcasting Transmission System, File No. CSS-90-017 [IBFS File No. SAT-LOA--19900723-00002]; Amendment File No. SAT-AMD-19990125-00016 (Call Sign 52367)

Dear Ms. Salas,

I am writing in my capacity as Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of *Addis Tribune*, the first non-government newspaper in Ethiopia.

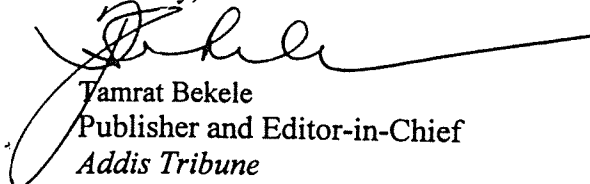
Since 1991, Ethiopia has been engaged in effecting a transition to democratic rule. The advent of a free press is a central part of Ethiopia's transitional democracy. In the absence of an effective opposition, the independent press has played a critical role in fostering the public's critical awareness of governmental policy. Greater transparency and accountability of public authorities is a major achievement of Ethiopia's emergent independent press.

Beyond the problems attending the institution of a free press against the background of more than half a century of autocratic and authoritarian rule, the independent press and its role in public life faces various challenges. The circulation of the printed press is limited by illiteracy, the high price owing to the cost of paper, printing and the like. In these circumstances, the voice of the independent would be more powerful if it were complemented by radio transmission with extensive reach and easy access. Radio, aside from its inherent advantages in our conditions, would also cultivate a wider readership for the printed press.

I am therefore eager to see the realization of AFRISPACE's satellite transmission system. I am confident that AFRISPACE and the progress in communication it promotes would result in a significant leap ahead in the capacity of the free press in Ethiopia and its role as informant and advocate of citizen and community interests.

Please extend your approval to AFRISPACE's application.

Sincerely,



Tamrat Bekele
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief
Addis Tribune