

Closing Statement – Alemaya Class of 1985

My dear friends,
My brothers and sisters of the **great Alemaya Class of 1985**,

Wow... just **look around** for a moment.

Forty years ago, if someone had told us we would gather like this—still laughing, still teasing each other, still arguing about dorm life and cafeteria food—I'm not sure we would have believed them. Yet here we are... older, wiser, and let's be honest—**much better dressed**.

Forty years ago, we were young, restless, and very sure we knew everything. We survived lectures, deadlines, fieldwork, dorm life, and exams that felt like they were designed *specifically* to break us. We shared books, coffee, jokes, dreams—and sometimes even shoes and soap. We didn't have smartphones, Google, or WhatsApp... but somehow, we survived—and thrived.

And speaking of WhatsApp...

Allow me one small personal moment.

In **October 2022**, one simple idea became a WhatsApp group. That group became conversations. Conversations became reconnections. Reconnections became planning. And planning became **this incredible celebration**. What started as a few messages turned into a reunion that brought us from across Ethiopia and around the world—back home to Alemaya. That alone tells us something powerful: **the bond was never broken; it was only waiting to be reawakened**.

This reunion is not just an event.

It is a **homecoming**.

It is proof that time and distance may stretch us—but they do not erase us.

Of course, our joy today carries a quiet sadness as well.

Not all of our classmates could be here with us. Some left us far too soon. We remember them with love, gratitude, and respect. Their stories are woven into our own. Their families remain part of this Alemaya family, and we carry a shared responsibility to remember, to support, and to honor them—not just today, but always.

My friends, look at what we represent.

For forty years, this class has served—as educators, researchers, public servants, professionals, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and mentors. We have worked in villages and capitals, in Ethiopia and beyond. We have helped shape institutions, policies, and lives. And the truth is—**we are not done yet**.

We still have experience to share.

We still have younger generations watching us.

We still have a responsibility—to give back, to stay connected, and to carry forward the values Alemaya planted in us.

So let this reunion not be an ending—but a **reset**.

A reset of friendship.

A reset of purpose.

A reset of commitment to one another.

My dear Class of 1985,

Thank you—for showing up.

Thank you—for the laughter, the memories, and the love.

Thank you—for proving that forty years later, **we still belong to each other**.

As we leave tonight, may we travel safely, stay connected, and carry this joy with us. And may we say with confidence:

Our story continues.

Our bond endures.

And the Alemaya Class of 1985—still stands strong.

Thank you. God bless you all.