

March 19, 2019

Dear Mayor Soglin, members of the Common Council, ladies and gentlemen:

My name is Charles James. I am currently Chair of the Sister City Collaboration Committee representing the nine sister cities that Madison has around the world. The last time I stood before you was on Tuesday, November 20, 2018, when I supported the creation of a sister city relationship between Madison, Wisconsin, and Bahir-Dar in Ethiopia.

When I heard of the crash of Ethiopian Airlines 302, with 9 of 157 victims being Ethiopians, my very first question was if any residents of Bahir-Dar were aboard. Fortunately, this was not the case. However, in the meantime, I've learned of connections between the Ethiopian community and Madison which Rahel Desalegne will address in her remarks.

On behalf of the Sister City Collaboration Committee, I wish to express my sincere condolences to our colleagues in the Madison-Bahir-Dar Sister City Committee and to the Ethiopian community here in Madison and around the world for the loss of life in this catastrophe. In addition, there were 8 passengers from Italy and 5 passengers from Germany on that flight who also died. We have sister cities in these countries, too.

All such tragedies affect us in some way, but through relationships such as sister cities, we learn to appreciate how deeply connected we all are. Our hearts go out to the families in Ethiopia and their friends here in Madison in these days of mourning. We mourn with them.

Thank you.