



ረዕይ ለኢትዮጵያ

[www.visionethiopia.org](http://www.visionethiopia.org) Email [Visionethiopia2016@gmail.com](mailto:Visionethiopia2016@gmail.com)

Vision Ethiopia

## **Third Conference Transition and Constitution Making in Post-Conflict Ethiopia**

### **Conference Communique**

#### **Background**

Vision Ethiopia, an independent and nonpartisan network of Ethiopian academics and professionals, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT), organized a two-day conference entitled “Roadmap for Transition and Constitution Making in Post-Conflict Ethiopia”, on October 22 and 23, 2016. The Conference was convened at Georgetown Marriot Hotel and Renaissance Hotel, Washington D.C., and was graced by the presence of several Ethiopians of all backgrounds, including, experts on constitution making, conflict resolution and peace building, political scientists, scholars, former diplomats, and leaders of religious and civic organizations. The event was live streamed throughout the world.

The conference addressed the current situation in Ethiopia and explored the pre-conditions, modalities, and pathways for establishing a stable post-conflict social, economic and political order in the country. The participants examined and deliberated on the root causes of the crisis engulfing the country and the implications of the declaration of State of Emergency by the ruling party.

Accordingly Conference participants accomplished the following:

- A. Discussed the atrocities being committed by the ruling party, paid tribute to all those killed by the regime since it came to power and sent their condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims; acknowledged the sufferings of those injured and those who were sent to prisons for demanding their civil and political rights;
- B. Commended the courage of the patriotic Ethiopians all over the country for standing firm on demanding for freedom from repression, bad governance, fraudulent elections and violations of civil, political and human rights;
- C. Underscored the urgency of ending TPLF’s/EPRDF’s divide-and-rule policies, and the need to build alliances embracing our shared beliefs and values, while at the same time acknowledging our diversity in ways that promote respect and appreciation to each other;
- D. Emphasized the necessity of developing a collaborative and reconciliation efforts by all Ethiopians, working towards establishing a new political order in Ethiopia where



freedom, the rule of law, citizenship, and religious and human rights are fully respected and practiced.

Therefore, conference participants agreed that it is imperative to initiate a comprehensive and inclusive process to identify the road map for a post-conflict political, social, and economic order in Ethiopia. Accordingly, Conference participants recommend a set of principles that help end the violence and facilitate the reconciliation process towards establishing a peaceful transitional arrangement for sustainable peace and democratic order. The Conference participants call for the government to:

- 1.1. Immediately lift the State of Emergency
- 1.2. Stop the killings!
- 1.3. Stop the imprisonment of peaceful protesters in Ethiopia and fully respect the civil and political rights of the Ethiopian people.
- 1.4. Allow independent investigations of the violence by a team of United Nations Human Rights Council, local human rights organizations as well as other credible international organizations. Upon the findings of such independent investigations, hold those responsible fully accountable;
- 1.5. Immediately release all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, including those in secret concentration camps without any precondition.
- 1.6. Remove the restrictions imposed on the diplomatic and international business communities residing in Addis Ababa.

## **2. Action-Based Roadmap for Confidence-Building Measures and Reconciliation**

Consensus was reached among Conference participants in regards to establishing the foundation for post-conflict political order on clear and shared vision and mission. Consequently, conference participants outlined the following action-based principles for the roadmap, which include confidence building measures, reconciliation efforts, and willingness for all stakeholders to do their fair share in realizing a peaceful transition into a new political order that provides peace, stability, and democracy to all Ethiopians. Whereas, it takes the effort of all Ethiopians and the international community to facilitate the smooth transition to durable peace in Ethiopia, conference participants identify specific set of measures that need to be undertaken by the ruling party, opposition parties in the country, armed and unarmed opposition forces, diaspora based political and civic movements, Ethiopian citizens both at home and abroad, to realize the potentials of the proposed roadmap.

### **2.1. The Ruling party- TPLF/EPRDF**

Conference panelists and participants fully recognize that the instruments of violence are primarily in the hands of the government- its security forces and the military apparatus. Protesters and civilians have legitimate rights to demand a responsible, accountable, and effective government that delivers for the economic, political, social challenges of the public.



Citizens have the right to demand an unfettered free and fair election. Repressive methods and violence are not solutions for political problems. Serious violations of the rights of civilians, the abuse of political power, and widespread corruption have been widely recognized and even admitted by the ruling party itself. As a result, the government has completely lost legitimacy and the consent of the public. It is therefore critically important for the ruling party to accept these facts and master the courage to initiate a new peace plan to resolve the current crisis. The ruling party must realize the fact that its reaction to the popular resistance is making matters even worse. Its promise to transform itself, after 25 years in power, cabinet reshuffle or change of personnel and minor election concession are not sufficient to bring peace. Therefore, the conference participants underscored the immediate need for the government to contribute to peace making by:

- (1) Realizing that there is a need for a new transition, the party must prepare itself for change.
- (2) Lifting the State of Emergency immediately and releasing all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience without any precondition so that genuine negotiations can start.
- (3) Declaring clearly its commitment to peaceful and inclusive political dialogue with all stakeholders;
- (4) Facilitating a national dialogue on main political, economic and social issues and the modalities; including the formation of a Transition Council;
- (5) Removing all obstacles for the peaceful and robust national dialogue and for mapping out a new pathway for the establishment of a new political order in the country;
- (6) Ensuring public and private media outlets are free to facilitate the exchange of political ideas, programs, and discussions so as to engage the larger public in the peace process;
- (7) Immediately repealing the ban on some political parties and armed organizations so that they are reintegrated into normal life;
- (8) Taking series of confidence building measures so that all Ethiopians participate in the new post-conflict political, economic and social order.

## **2.2. Transition Council**

Conference participants have deliberated on a number of modalities and possibilities, including carefully taking into consideration our historical, cultural and social foundations as basis for reconciliation and for addressing the contending demands of our current situation. Upon deliberation, Conference participants underlined the importance of using our own traditional institutions of peaceful and just reconciliation that provides mutually acceptable and honorable way out from the crisis situation.

Conference participants recommend the formation of Transition Council with tasks of peace-making and peace building. Members of the Council are Ethiopians who have proved themselves and earned the respect of their communities for their unbiased, just, and fairness in dealing with issues of conflict, justice, moral independence, and humbleness. Participants of the



conference firmly support that the current crisis demands finding indigenous and tradition considered solutions for our political, social, and economic problems and every effort must be made to facilitate the formation and empowering the Transition Council.

The Transition Council should:

- (1) On behalf of the people of Ethiopia, facilitate the peaceful, orderly, and smooth transition period until the formation of a new republic and the establishment of a new government of national unity;
- (2) Uphold basic principles of UN Declarations on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, with emphasis on Freedom of Assembly and Association, Freedom of Religion, Freedom of Movement, Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Life, and the Civil and Political Rights of all Citizens.
- (3) Invite all political parties including existing and new generation of political leaders to engage fully in the political process, and communicate with their constituencies in public places throughout the country;
- (4) Allow, facilitate and guarantee the unconditional return of armed groups and political exiles and provide security and safety of all returnees;
- (5) Allow all stakeholders – political parties, civil society organizations, trade unions, students, youth, women organizations, religious leaders, etc. to be full participants of the reconciliation and peace-building process;
- (6) Declare acceptance and commitment to the outcomes of the National Constitutional Dialogue including a Transitional National Government.
- (7) Allow and facilitate the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that will investigate, acknowledge and compensate those politically motivated and unlawfully killed, victims of torture, imprisoned and/or prosecuted;
- (8) Establish an independent, non-partisan, and credible and effective Electoral Board; establish a reliable systems and processes, and allow the selection and appointment of a non-partisan, independent, qualified, fully representative national electoral board staff that earns the trust and support of the Ethiopian people;
- (9) Allow and guarantee a level playing-field to all contesting political parties in the drafting of the National Charter and elections;
- (10) Create conducive environment for the media and civil society to operate freely;
- (11) Oversee the transfer of political power to the newly elected party or coalition of parties.

### **2.3. Opposition Parties**

Conference participants recognize that the Ethiopian people are yearning for new leaders. In order to ensure democracy, peace, the rule of law, accountability, and freedom, it is critically important that all political parties should aspire to achieve political power only through the consent of the electorate. The parties must contribute to the establishment of institutions that



create suitable environment for credible electoral processes and political accountability. Conference participants call upon all opposition parties operating now or those that may emerge in the future to adhere to the central principles that respect the ultimate source of political power is the general electorate. To facilitate the full participation of opposition parties, civil societies, and religious institutions in the Ethiopian political process, we call up on all parties and coalitions to:

- (1) Immediately convene a national conference to establish a new political order in Ethiopia;
- (2) Come together and negotiate in good faith to collaborate in drafting the National Charter, appoint members of the Constitutional Drafting Commission and design methods of ratifying it;
- (3) Demonstrate willingness to reciprocate goodwill gestures to opposition groups, including members of the ruling party;
- (4) Promote internal party democracy and transparency;
- (5) Negotiate and agree, in good faith, to establish a Transitional/Interim Council/Government;
- (6) Seek to formulate their policies which would guarantee political stability, articulate their party's positions, all in for the betterment of the general public.
- (7) Protect and defend the interests of all Ethiopians and the unity and sovereignty of the country.

#### **2.4. The International and Donor Community**

Conference participants recognize the role of the international community - donor countries and multilateral institutions-in playing an enabling role in the current or future governments of Ethiopia. Participants also noted the geopolitical situation of the region. The conference underscored that it is to the interest of the international community that a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Ethiopia at peace with itself emerges. Conference participants, therefore, call upon the international and donor community to:

- (1) facilitate the effort of the Ethiopian people towards establishing a post-conflict political order;
- (2) put pressure and encourage the ruling party to seriously consider convening an inclusive conference for a National Charter;
- (3) provide technical and independent and transparent assistance for all parties and coalitions in their effort to build legal organizational structures and political programs;
- (4) Encourage and assist all parties for an inclusive dialogue;
- (5) Assist for the establishment of an independent and fully transparent Electoral Board, for an unfettered free and fair election, for the respect of the rule of law, and democracy;
- (6) Encourage and put pressure on all parties so that women, youth, minorities, and the under privileged will be provided equal opportunities in drafting the National Charter and constitution, appointing Constitution Writing Commission and in all walks of political life;
- (7) Use democratic principles as their guide for establishing a genuine political system and institutions;
- (8) Respect the unity and territorial integrity of the country.



## **2.5. The Ethiopian People at Large**

The Ethiopian people have never been fully in control of their political power. In the long and successive history of Ethiopia, Ethiopian rulers have always deprived the citizens to exercise their legitimate political rights and resorted to brutal violence to eliminate actual or perceived and potential “enemies” suspected of threatening their exclusive and abusive power. Conference participants recognize the central importance of a full and complete transition to the birth of a new republic in which all Ethiopian citizens are equal under the law, live and exercise their inalienable rights. It is time politics to be guided only by the consent of the electorate. It is time for holding public office to be public trust. It is time for public officials to be accountable for any breach of public trust. Never again should the Ethiopian people be subjected to repression, political violence, corruption and injustice. To ensure a new, peaceful, inclusive, and democratic political system emerging in Ethiopia, Conference participants call upon the Ethiopian people to:

- (1) stay vigilant and continue to protect your civil, political and economic rights;
- (2) hold all political parties and politicians accountable for breach of trust, inefficiency, and political corruption and human rights violations;
- (3) recognize the fact that our diversity in unity is our strength and the building block for peace and prosperity;
- (4) appeal to all Ethiopian citizens both at home and in the Diaspora to engage in the political, economic, and social life of their country;
- (5) cultivate the politics of inclusivity and mutual cooperation to address the diverse economic, social, political, and environmental challenges of the country;
- (6) And, cultivate and reinvigorate the political culture of accountability, justice, freedom, equality, and honor defend and protect Ethiopia’s sovereignty
- (7) Continue to put pressure on political parties to be fewer and build strong and stable organizations based on shared vision and mission.
- (8) Create cross cultural and interfaith bridges, and protect minorities.

This Communique is adopted at the end of the Conference on this day of October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016, at the city of Washington DC, United State of America.