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Concerned Ethiopia Statement On The Ethiopian National Dialogue

During the last five decades, Ethiopia has undergone several violent changes in systems of governance. Thousands of Ethiopians have perished or fled their country during the changes from monarchy to military dictatorship to ethnic federalism to a reformed federalism.

The struggle between monarchists and reformers, reactionaries vs. revolutionaries, nationalists vs. secessionists and ethno-nationalists vs. unitary-federalists has caused much instability in Ethiopia. Now, a unique opportunity for all parties involved to reach a consensus through dialogue has availed itself under the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission.

Concerned Ethiopians believe the commissioners will gather and present, in a timely manner, ideas ranging from a very loose federation to a strong central government.

We would like to suggest that the following issues be specifically addressed by the commission:

- (1) Revision of the Constitution, to remove or change any provisions that endanger Ethiopian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Include a requirement by any sitting PM to show up in parliament every quarter or so to present the state of the country and to address questions, especially from opposition representatives.
- (2) Truth & Reconciliation: Restorative rather than Retributive Justice for actions by previous regimes, ensuring that a non-partisan, open forum is available to hear grievances from all, and that they are taken seriously and addressed accordingly. The process should remove all hate statutes and discourage extreme partisanship.
- (3) Peace and Justice: strengthening Ethiopia's election, justice and law enforcement intuitions in order to build a fair society.



- (4) Revision of the internal, regional boundaries and abolishing the ethnic based federalism. Consider special autonomy, dual or other inclusive administrative mechanisms for contested territories.
- (5) Determination of what happens with the regional militias, strengthening the national defense forces, ensuring power is not fragmented to regions led by warlords.
- (6) Guaranteeing private ownership of land but ensuring that citizens are not robbed of their property with impunity.
- (7) Electoral reform for genuine competition. Replacing the winner take all system with proportional assignment of votes, allowing smaller parties to get real power in cases where coalition governments are formed. When an election winner does not have a majority vote, conduct runoffs between the top two candidates.
- (8) Investigation of TPLF War Crimes & looted treasure.
- (9) Support for building strong institutions based on transparency and for the use technology for accountability.
- (10) Granting the Diaspora to have a voting right like Turkey and Israel.
- (11) Removing the pentagram star seal in the Ethiopian flag and keeping the neutral tri-color so that the flag does not become an emblem of a specific regime.
- (12) Stopping the arbitrary arrest of citizens and journalists.

As experienced in 2021, Ethiopia was under and is still facing an existential threat from the terrorist TPLF group to grab power through the barrel of the gun. Concerned Ethiopians express its unease with the possible breach in due legal process during the State of Emergency. While we understand that the Ethiopian government must protect the country from breaking up, it must be vigilant not to harm innocent citizens and squash legitimate challenges to its policies and their implementation.

A system where the majority rules but the minority has rights allows grievances to be addressed through debate. Concerned Ethiopians believe the National Dialogue Commission will pave the path for Ethiopia to get to a system of governance where the consent of the governed will be voluntary instead of coerced. We are also encouraged by the decision of the ruling party to make the nomination of the National Dialogue an open process and extend the nomination period.

As Martin Luther King said, "We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now" to identify and resolve our differences through this commission. A successful dialogue including the above issues will help to ensure a bright future for Ethiopia.