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The Process, Result and Future Requirement of the 23 May 2010 Ethiopian Elections

Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Dear Journalists, Invited Guests and AEUP members.

As you all know, Ethiopia has conducted National and Regional Elections on May 23 2010. The AEUP participated in both the national and regional elections with 1130 candidates and witnessed that the process was dramatically anti-democratic, lacked the rule of law and not up to international standard. It was neither fair nor free. The result was rigged all across the breadth and length of the country.

The 23 May 2010 National and Regional Elections took place based on Political Parties Code of Conduct Proclamations No. 662/2009, of which the members of the Ethiopian Partners Group (EPG) represented in this hall helped initiate and negotiate with the incumbent. In the proclamation it is strictly stipulated that both process and results of the elections shall be “transparent, free, legitimate, fair, peaceful, democratic and acceptable to the people”. The proclamation also recognizes “the people as [the] source of state authority, its [owner and controller] thereof for which the Ethiopian [People] have been struggling throughout their long history.”

However, to the dismay of all stakeholders, the National and Regional Elections both in their process and results did not live up to any of these noble aspirations and declarations. As indicated above they were rigged and completely below international standard and could not and are not acceptable to the Ethiopian people, as illustrated through various reports from our nation-wide regional offices and from our own discussion with the Addis Abeba citizens through various means. Hence, there is no acceptable government power transmission based on publicly elected and accepted government.

The breach of the electoral law was carried out by EPRDF in full cooperation by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), although the law also stipulates that the latter shall be independent of the former and shall conduct its responsibility without influence from any source.

Our party, AEUP, from the very beginning and throughout the full process of the election, has submitted its complaints as they occurred both to EPRDF and NEBE, with the hope of both resolving the problems at issue and the final result shall be free, fair and acceptable to all participants and stakeholder in the elections. As the process was full of harassment and intimidation by the incumbent, so was the Election Day, ending with the full control of the ballots by the incumbent with the support of its accomplice NEBE and the so-called public observers who were appointed by EPRDF and not elected by the people in their precincts.

The need for election of the public observers was indeed brought up, by all opposition parties including AEUP, to the attention of the Council of Political Parties and NEBE who gave it only lip service and did not receive due correction needed at the time and we had to go into the election process without elected public observers throughout the country. Even worse, observers of the opposition political parties were either denied to observe, as they were harassed and intimidated during the registration and imprisoned when they came for observation or those who managed to observe were compelled to sign the results of the ballot, although the ballots opened before the opposition parties arrived early in the morning before the due time and the ballot boxes were not checked. This divergence was also brought to the attention of NEBE but to no avail.

The result of the election, 99.6 percent of the ballots to EPRDF and none to the opposition parties including AEUP, was, of course, fully consistent with the tactics used by the incumbent in the process of the election and on the polling day, and was intended for the sole election of EPRDF to the detriment of opposition parties.

AEUP brought the case for re-election first to NEBE supporting it with 50 pages of documented evidence, which NEBE denied in spite of our evidences that are clear and well known to NEBE and all stakeholders, and also indicated in the document. NEBE claimed that AEUP has no evidence for (i) harassment, intimidation and imprisonment of candidates and our supporters during registration and campaigning, and (ii) for unlawful prevention of party observers to observe the ballot day and the rigging of the ballots. Strange indeed!

Subsequently, we appealed to the Supreme Court for reconsideration of our case. Our request, of course, fell on deaf ears as the court refused to consider the case because we have not brought up the case at the lower courts and NEBE need not investigate the case unless it wanted to.

In accordance to Proclamation No. 532/2007 article 7/10 the Board is required to investigate the case brought to its attention by political parties on the basis of their evidence.

Furthermore, opposition parties are required to bring their case to the courts only as a last resort after exhausting the matter with the Council of Political Parties and NEBE, according to the Proclamation Providing for the Code of Conduct for Political Parties No. 662/2009 articles 24-26, which address Complaint Handling and Dispute Resolution.

Failing to obtain fair and free hearing and decision at the Supreme Court, AEUP further appealed to the Court of Cassation, which also upheld the ruling by the Supreme Court.

Having exhausted to obtain a fair and free hearing through the legal means at all places, AEUP and the opposition are now compelled to resort to the last means, the people who are the source, owners and controllers of state power.

Distinguished Participants

All evidences that were gathered through our regional offices and Addis Abeba indicate that the election process was not free and fair and the ballot is rigged, and hence the election is invalid. The rule of law is breached by the very organs that are supposed to uphold it. Good Relations and Good Governance between the people and government is severed by the Ruling Party and Government.

As you all know, peaceful political process is based on the freedom, fairness and fulfilled democratic rights of the people. In spite of these truths and on the morrow of 23 May 2009 election, the Ruling Party has continued (i) harassment and intimidation of our members and supporters, (ii) uprooting of opposition party members from farm land and (iii) expelling of our candidates from government employments. Even in some cases our members are killed for their political views. AEUP has now come to the full conclusion that it has no where to go to obtain justice but the people.

Our party, the AEUP, has for long 18 years been sharing our peoples sufferings. Our people have said all along the breadth and length of our country, enough is enough, and can no longer accept injustice by the incumbent. They reject the Ruling Party and Government being above the law and require them to operate within the Ethiopian Constitution and its various laws, including those indicated above.

AEUP shall continue to stand for the causes of freedom, justice, democracy and good governance through peaceful means. Like the Ethiopian people, AEUP can no more accept the injustices, in any form, by the Ruling Party and Government.

Today, AEUP, and indeed all opposition parties, seek peace loving people and democratic states in general and the Ethiopian Partners Group who initiated and helped negotiation of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, come to the aid of the Ethiopian people in their endeavor to achieve their aspiration of peaceful democratic transition of their government. In this process, AEUP shall continue to stand by the side of the Ethiopian people and calls upon the media, the judiciary and the security forces to do likewise.

The Unity and Integrity of the Ethiopian people and nation shall not be compromised.
Long live Ethiopia!

Thank you.