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The Saga
Of
23 May 2010 Federal and Regional Elections
And
The Way Forward

Addis Abeba
29 June 2010



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Part I: The Saga of the 23 May 2010 Federal and
Regional Elections

Now that EPRDF with the help of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has finally declared on 22 June 2010 a unitary system of government, following the robbery it has undertaken of the people's vote on 23 May 2010 national and regional elections, the question that faces the people at large and all opposition parties in particular is how to go forward in an elite, civilized manner.

AEUP would argue that we should continue to pursue the peaceful path it started on eighteen years ago. Any major shift should be in advocacy work for organizing and bringing together the Ethiopian intelligentsia, who have not managed to show willingness to speak to each other, listen to each other, compare their own thoughts with those of others and speak out their minds, cooperate, compromise and follow win-win situation to eventually organize themselves under a platform of Ethiopianism¹ to gain government power.

But first, however, we wish to present briefly the story of the elections in a chronological manner and then surmise on why the incumbent, EPRDF, opted for a Unitary System of Government? Is it the result of design or accident as Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said in his speech at the so-called public rally on 24 June 2010, which was not spontaneous as the Ruling Party wants us to believe but had been concocted well about ten days before the polling day?

If it is by design, what did EPRDF plan to achieve that it did not obtain during the last 19 years in power in general and the last five years in particular? If it is just to maintain that power, why did it need a unitary system? If it is accidental, in which case its campaign

¹ Our definition of Ethiopianism is simple. One should accept that one is an Ethiopian, a country of multi-ethnic society that has thousands of years of history connected by political, social and economic ties, including a central government (much more clearly and firmly than most countries in Africa supported by written system of government), inter-trade, intermarriage, cultural interaction, social security in the face of famine or individual crisis, geographical connectivity and interdependence in the face of foreign aggression.

strategy mistakenly obtained 99.6 per cent vote for the incumbent, how would it behave and deal with its fortune, which could turn out to be a misfortune unless wisely handled?

Given 19 years of experience in power, EPRDF did not have major problem passing, implementing and supervising legislations. Most opposition parties are ethnic-based and its own creation, which lacked the vision or the interest or the determination to oppose the incumbent on any major issue or policy. Genuine opposition figures have been few in parliament and so divided too that they were and still are so that, in addition to the tight government procedure and control in spite of the Ethiopian Constitution with regard to public organisation and demonstration, they could not rally the public behind them to influence action by the incumbent. So, what is EPRDF afraid of in maintaining a minority and weak opposition parties in parliament in the subsequent five years from 2010 to 2015? Did it fear any risk to maintaining its state power?

The way to address the issue is to examine EPRDF's election campaign strategy from the abundant information that is at AEUP's disposal and observed in practice, of which it, its members and supporters as well as other opposition parties and the public at large are the victims. The strategic actions are presented in the order of time they occurred in the process of the election. They are classified for ease of presentation as pre-election period, registration time, campaign time and polling day.

Pre-Election Period Strategy

Right early on, about two weeks prior to approval of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties on 13 October 2009, the incumbent embarked upon intimidation, harassment and imprisonment of AEUP's strong executive member in Goffa, Sawla town, in South Regional State. We informed EPRDF chief negotiator to the Code of Conduct about the case. Less than an hour later we were informed that he was released from prison. AEUP Executive Committee was happy but said at its meeting the same day that either EPRDF had decided to change which was desirable and for which we worked so hard or its quick and positive action, although in line with the agreement of the Code of Conduct, was a bait. In retrospect this latter assessment proved correct as the reader will note below that all along the election process and on the polling day EPRDF had been working for its sole election at the expense of AEUP and other opposition parties.

Similar intimidation, harassment, beating and imprisonment against AEUP officers, members and supporters continued more intensively throughout the country including in the Amara National State, Benishangul-Gumuz National State, Afar National State and Oromiya National State. Not only are our officers and members potential contenders to the Ruling Party potential candidates in their areas for election but the officers are also responsible for recruiting potential AEUP candidates for election. They are well known and respected in their localities by all standards – as community organizers, good public employees, have comparable education, are well motivated and have high personal character. Hence, the danger they faced from our arch rival, AEUP.

Why similar problems did not take place in Addis Abeba, Dire Dewa, Harari and Somalia at this time is not clear. It may be hypothesized that AEUP is not strong enough

in Dire Dawa, Harari and Somalia in addition to the fact that these places are territories of EPRDF's allied political parties, namely Harari Democratic Alliance, OPDO and SODEPA. Furthermore, the regions are small and EPRDF did not care but for Addis Abeba, which is both big and is the seat of the Federal Government, Diplomatic Communities, African Union, European Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and other International Organizations. Indeed EPRDF shall be careful in Addis Abeba as it is liable to being caught red handed. Hence, why it did not exercise as much intimidation, harassment, beating and imprisonment of our potential candidates as it did elsewhere.

Most of our officers who fell victim to EPRDF's election strategy were released following expiry of registration of candidates for election. Of course EPRDF's intention was clear. Either to prevent them from opting to become candidates themselves and/or to limit the number of candidates they could recruit for the election. In the former EPRDF did not succeed as we managed to register them because the victims wanted to remain loyal to their commitment as AEUP candidates. Furthermore, AEUP filed complaint at the Joint Council of Political Parties, which supported its case and asked the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to register and, of course, the latter did so although registration time has elapsed. We say of course, because we have found out in the course of four months of the election process how NEBE operated in tandem with EPRDF, although according to the Ethiopian Constitution it is supposed to be free and independent of the Ruling Party.

At the Joint Council meeting we argued that it was a deliberate act on the part of EPRDF cadres, allied parties and the regional state administrators either to prevent or discourage the candidature of our members. As no case was filed against these victims and they were not taken to court but detained for no obvious reasons in police stations and EPRDF representatives acted as go-between AEUP and local administrators to get them released, hence EPRDF acting as the good guy and benefactor, it was not difficult to get these officers registered as AEUP candidates for election, although the registration time has elapsed. It was much more difficult to get them out of prison evidently because they were strong competitors to the incumbent and allied parties' candidates and/or helped recruit other competitors, whom the Ruling Party and allied parties would have difficult time to contend with in election.

It is obvious from the above presentation that the Ruling Party and its allied parties in the Regional States had one and the same election strategy, which minimized competitors and their success and maximized the incumbent's gains in the election. This is now proven with 100 per cent vote throughout the country for both EPRDF and its allied parties. The next stage in the struggle for EPRDF and its allied parties to remain in power by hook or crook is the actual beginning of the election process, the registration period.

Registration Period Strategy

The registration period started early January 2010. Four types of registrations are recognized - voter registration; candidate registration, both party candidates and independents; local observers' election and party observers registration.

Voter Registration: Voter registration lasted 29 days from 9 January to 17 February 2010 except for Somali Region where voter registration and candidate registration were conducted over a period of 21 days beginning 9 March 2010. AEUP later complained and supported by other opposition parties, 10 days were added for further registration of voters.

The main problem at this time was two-fold. First and foremost the incumbent refused to engage in debate with the opposition before registration started. AEUP argued that the Ethiopian people were disappointed at the 2005 election result and needed moral boosting before they could be persuaded to register en mass. EPRDF refused and AEUP did not receive strong backing from the opposition parties in the Council of Political Parties, and registration went ahead in accordance with the wish of the former.

The other problem of the registration period was that the opposition lacked the means, financing and other facilities, to encourage people to register. To the best of our knowledge not a single opposition party including AEUP put up an advertisement and/or organized conferences for the public to come out and register in large numbers. We could not publicly explain the importance of registration. It may be said that because the circulation of the newspapers were limited to only urban centres, which are only less than 15 per cent of the population and mainly in a few major urban centres, one might argue that advertisements may not have the desired impact. However, if we had conducted public gathering throughout Addis Abeba and the regions, we have no doubt that we could have had an impact on the registration.

Furthermore, the opposition did not have the benefit of Kebele offices and easy access to local dwellers that EPRDF cadres had and still have to encourage voter registration. Maintaining offices in the different Kebeles or neighbourhoods and local administration offices throughout the country, EPRDF cadres knew who is who in their neighbourhoods and offices. They approached people as they came to the administration to obtain services. In addition, the cadres and/or NEBE officers went house to house and registered voters. In fact, one EPRDF cadre is required to register five to ten voters that he/she controlled and made sure that those registered under him/her voted for EPRDF.

On the other hand, when other voters whom the cadres felt would not vote for the incumbent, NEBE officers closed offices and disappeared or said registration cards were finished thus refusing genuine voters from registering. It is interesting to note that EPRDF cadres and NEBE election officers are one and the same. They are all party members and worked for the same goal. Hence, the cooperation between the two groups.

Of course, it must be said that the incumbent using Kebele offices for party activities is blatant abuse of power, which AEUP has complained at the Joint Council of Political

Parties but did not manage to stop. This is one important area in which the opposition would challenge the incumbent in the days ahead and very soon at that if pluralistic democracy should start taking root as soon as possible in Ethiopia.

The fact that civil servants and party cadres are not distinguishable is another major problem that faced opposition parties and the people alike in the election process. The civil servants either shied away from politics or engaged in supporting the incumbent in conducting its illegal activities. In particular, administrators, the police force and the prosecution helped EPRDF in its activity to prevent AEUP and other opposition parties from freely and fairly competing with the incumbent in the election.

Civil servants are now being required to be members of the incumbent. To become a civil servant the process is getting tough. New job entrants to civil services must become EPRDF members or else no government job. Existing civil servants are either members of EPRDF or must stay mute about politics to retain their jobs. Considering that government is the largest employer in the country makes employment a very critical element. In addition to the Civil Service College that was established as soon as EPRDF took power for the purpose of training its cadres and administrators and other short and long term training opportunities offered them in the country and abroad at the tax payers' cost, since the last few years even students are required to be EPRDF members to qualify for the opportunity of higher learning.

Another also important obstacle to registration is students were refused registration claiming that they were not 18 years old, the permissible age for voting. Furthermore, university and college students and the army were allowed registration only to vote for candidates in their locality from where they come from rather than in the place they live at the time of the voting. The students and soldiers may or may not know the persons they were voting for as they live far away from the locality they originally came from. The intention and consequence of this strategy does not augur a fair and free election. On the polling day we had also witnessed like many voters who were issued several voting cards, university students polling in Kebelles throughout the country in addition to polling in their universities.

The NEBE reported that of the potential 37 million voters some 32 million were registered. This is roughly 86 per cent of the potential voters. This is not bad by international standard. But by Ethiopian standard this is not enough. It is not unusual to have 90-95 per cent voter registration. The most important concern opposition parties have however is not that 86 per cent is small but that is it true that 86 per cent of the population were registered? Were non registered voters and double voters used to boost the number of votes to beef up the ballot box in addition to shifting votes from the opposition to the incumbent in the absence of party representatives at the polling stations? As indicated above these facts were clearly demonstrated on the polling day.

Furthermore, the scenario is not far fetched because well before the polling day and during the distribution of election ballots, voting papers were stolen and reported by AEUP to EPRDF. Hence, why many voters had more than one voting papers. Secondly,

ballots on which EPRDF was already elected before the polling day were found in several places. Thirdly, and consistently on the polling day, all of these plus harassment, beating and imprisonment of our party representatives were undertaken so that they could not attend the polling day. As a result the incumbent cadres, election officers and local observers did whatever they wanted with the ballot box in favour of the ruling party.

In general, given AEUP's information from various precincts in Addis Abeba as well as from all parts of the country, but Gambella where it did not compete for election, the results of votes announced by the NEBE were rigged. There is no way of checking the authenticity of these votes as the system is not transparent and most people are afraid of openly speaking out in public against the government. In view of this and others not discussed here, the importance of freedom of expression, in whatever form, cannot be overemphasized, if human rights, democracy and the rule of law should prevail and peaceful transition of government power should take place in this Horn of Africa country. Short of these there is no way of making the government transparent, accountable for and trustworthy of its actions. The second type of registration is one of candidates.

Candidate-Registration Strategy: Candidates' registration lasted from December 2009 to 22 February 2010. Later on upon complaints from AEUP and supported by other opposition parties, the Joint Council for Political Parties approved our request for extension, which was later accepted by NEBE without difficulty.

The major problem, however, during candidate registration was two-fold. One, as indicated earlier some of our officers in the regional states who were our potential candidates and our representatives for recruiting suitable candidates were in prison and hence we could not get as many candidates as we would have recruited. More importantly, however, the NEBE created several petty but insurmountable obstacles for candidate registration.

Identification cards of candidates were claimed out of date, although every body knows that there is no federal or regional requirement for renewing it every year. Ability to speak the local language was another hurdle one has to pass for registration. Although our candidates spoke the dialect very well they were bluntly told they did not. Still others were denied registration because they were not born in the locality. The requirement is living in the neighbourhood only two years prior to the election not birth in the area. Still another obstacle was age. Some of our candidates were told they were younger than 20 years, the permissible age for candidature, although it was not true. In fact, in one instance in Amara Regional State, Western Gojam Zone, where medical certification existed and used to get one of our candidates registered.

Local Observers Election Strategy: Another critical registration phenomenon is election of local observers. Local observers were supposed to be elected by residents of the specific precincts. The communities needed to be informed of the election and meeting day well in advance, including by microphones in their own localities. The election had to be conducted in the presence of opposition parties, the ruling party and NEBE's representatives. Instead, the Ruling Party and NEBE simply appointed those that

were used in the 2008 Addis Abeba Council election to feel vacant parliamentary seats and local election without sufficient agitation and inviting communities to elect their local observers. It would be recalled that the 2008 elections were not competitive as EPRDF was the sole contender because Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) would not participate following the immediate release from about two years of imprisonment on the ground of inciting public disturbance. Hence, it is fair to say that local observers were representatives of EPRDF and other allied parties, a very critical strategy that influenced the polling day result.

Party Observers' Registration Strategy: The fourth type of registration is party observers for the polling day. Party observers were required for registration ten days before the Polling Day by NEBE. However, because EPRDF cadres were asking the names of AEUP and other opposition party representatives even before the ten days set by NEBE, our Party suspected the negative consequences of the demand and complained against it at the Joint Council of Political Parties. Other opposition parties similarly complained and with the consent of NEBE the number of days for notifying the names of party representatives to NEBE was reduced to five days before the polling day.

It must be said that party observers are crucial for reliable polling day votes. It is well known that representatives of civil societies are EPRDF hand-picked men and women. Hence, they could not be free and independent in the observation phenomenon. As indicated earlier it was also obvious that NEBE representatives and the Ruling Party representatives were one and the same. International observers could only randomly check conditions obtained at the polling stations. They could not attend the entire polling day process in every precinct. Hence, (i) they could not check in its entirety that the ballot boxes were empty at the beginning of the poll; (ii) the secret booths were truly secret and they were not messed up with; (iii) the explanations made by NEBE officers to voters on election procedure were not biased in favour of the incumbent or any other party; (iv) that government troops were not harassing voters in the vicinity of the election centres; and (v) that vote counts were accurate and all observers sanctioned them. Hence, the only dependable observer on the polling day were party representatives.

As expected with the exception of Addis Abeba, in all regional election centres where AEUP participated party observers were either intimidated, harassed and imprisoned so that they could not attend the polling day or they were forced to leave the polling station before they would sign the result of the count and other aspects of the poll or they were forced to sign as the election officers wanted to. The consequence of this is obvious but shall be shown shortly under polling day strategy. Following registration the next phase of the election process is the campaign.

Election Campaign Strategy

The campaign lasted for 100 days, from 9 February to 20 May 2010. The obvious EPRDF's campaign strategy was to use the media to the maximum possible while minimising its access to the opposition in general and the AEUP in particular. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that AEUP meetings in different parts of the country, including different parts of Addis Abeba, were attended by radio and television crew and

two to four hours programmes were recorded both by audio and video but only less than one minute programme was shown or heard on the ETV and radio respectively. Even in relation to other opposition parties AEUP received the least media attention, in accordance with EPRDF's plan of removing AEUP from the media, its robust rival.

As for EPRDF there is no distinction between government programmes and party agitations. Both were used to the maximum to explain to the people how performing and productive EPRDF had been over the last six years, the GDP growing at record levels of an average of 10.5 or more per cent per annum during the period in question.

The people and opposition parties responded by indicating that the government's claimed growth had neither been translated into food self sufficiency nor into equitable growth. Instead hunger, inflation and highly eschewed growth pattern were and are the hallmark of EPRDF's industry-lead agricultural development even in the six years the government claims had high growth unparalleled by many countries the world over. Furthermore, the people ask what had the government been doing over the previous 13 years of its rule if it now tells them that it had been growing over the last only six years? The fact could not be hidden under phoney questionable figures. Similar questions were being asked by the international community including by the World Bank, who is often quoted by the government as supportive of its growth statistics.

The media monopoly of the government was also obvious during the nine public debates that were conducted between the opposition parties on the one side and EPRDF on the other. First, EPRDF rejected AEUP's proposal for an open, live debate in the presence of public scrutiny and sufficient time allocation for the opposition to explain their programmes reasonably well as it refused to conduct debate prior to voters registration so that voters were induced to register. The debate was conducted in the Ethiopian Television studio where no body but the debaters and moderators were present. The incumbent had three times the time allotted to the opposition in the debate.

In a three-hour debate EPRDF had 67.5 minutes as opposed to 22.5 minutes each to the opposition. The debate was divided into three parts, introduction of ones case in about 7 minutes, rebuttal in 10 minutes and conclusion in 5 minutes for each of the opposition and 22, 30 and 15 minutes respectively for EPRDF. The time allocated to the opposition made it appear like a class debate rather than a debate to convince the 80 million Ethiopian people of diverse background, interest and understanding that are out there to be convinced about the oppositions' programme, candidates' professional background and integrity as compared to that of the incumbent. On the other hand, as witnessed during the debate, EPRDF had more than ample time to present its case to the point where its debaters had no substantive matter to say any more while the opposition did not find sufficient time to explain its case adequately.

In addition to the electronic media campaign, the incumbent had massive amount of ads and posters placed throughout the city. Posters were placed on trucks, city buses and taxis which drove around the city and played music while individuals appealed to the public to elect EPRDF.

In addition posters were posted on all highways in Addis Abeba within a few meters range of each other, costing millions of Birr. The posters indicated “Elect EPRDF” and individual candidates.

The opposition had modest ads including going around the city by trucks and calling the public to come out in massive numbers to vote and to vote for the opposition. In addition individual candidate posters were placed in different parts of the city appealing for the public’s vote. Yet these posters were either removed or torn apart or EPRDF posters placed on them. Furthermore, the opposition candidates in general and the AEUP candidates in particular were blamed by the incumbent candidates. Neither the opposition nor their parties had the experience and other capacities to lead the country, the incumbent claimed. These are, of course, empty words. If any thing, the incumbent is worse by any measure, if only the opposition had the opportunity to demonstrate themselves.

AEUP was in particular blamed by the EPRDF that it is not supportive of the rights of nationalities and it would expropriate farm land and give them to the rich. Indeed these are false accusations that are punishable by the Code of Conduct Proclamation No. 662/2009.

Because of the above reasons and others indicated elsewhere in this paper, the campaign was equally not free and fair as the registration, election of local observers and party representatives were not free and dealt with fairly at the polls.

It should be noted that use of state resources for campaigning by the Ruling Party was directly observed by the opposition parties as well as by the EU Observation Mission in all regions during the campaign as at all times before it.

The last part of the election process is indeed the polling day, the D-Day for both the Opposition and the Ruling Party.

The Polling Day Strategy

The Polling Day was on Sunday, 23 May 2010 from 5:30 am to 6:00 pm in the evening. As it turned out the polling day was no better than the other times of the election process. The D-Day turned out to be really great for the Ruling Party and mind boggling for the opposition.

The most unexpected outcome happened, the Ruling Party claiming 99.6 per cent of the vote, for the first time in 19 years, occupying both the federal parliament and regional parliament by itself with a few seats to its allied parties. Thus, Ethiopia once again became a unitary state where only one party made, implemented and supervised the laws and ruled the country by an iron hand, back to 36 years when the Derg deposed the monarchy. How did this happen? Did not the opposition make their presence felt at no time in the election process? These and other relevant questions raised above must be addressed.

The answer is already embedded in the strategy for the election process. As indicated in the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, if the election process is fouled up, the polling day outcome cannot be expected to be any different. The polling day proved equally not free and fair, hence the result.

Polls were opened and started operation in the absence of representatives of political parties, either because the representatives of the incumbent started polling **before** 5:30 am, when every observer was supposed to be there or because party observers were intimidated, harassed and imprisoned so that they could not attend and observe the polls. In other cases party observers were forced to go home before the ballots were counted. The former strategy took place primarily in Addis Abeba while the latter two strategies were adopted mainly in the Regional States.

It is interesting to note that most opposition parties did not have party observers at the polling stations because they do not even have offices in the regions but very few ones and in very few places. Hence, the only major opposition party that had party observers at the polls was AEUP. Nevertheless, its representatives were barred from the polling stations with the intention, obviously, of ensuring that the incumbent win the vote. This was later proven when NEBE announced EPRDF won the election by 99.6 per cent. What a joke!

What ever the cause since NEBE, the cadres and their accomplices began the polling without the presence of opposition parties representatives in most of the polling stations no one knew if the ballot boxes were not stuffed with election papers at the beginning of the poll or if the votes were not shifted between parties later on when the polls were counted. It is reported that both of these and other tactics were used depending on which one suited the election sites. When our party representatives arrived in time and asked to open the ballot boxes, they were refused. Later when ballots were counted, overruns as compared to voter registration were observed. These and other methods of systematic manipulation of the election all along the election process including the polling day ensured the 100 per cent win by the incumbent.

After nineteen years of ethnic-based multi-party authoritarian government we now have a unitary government where one party, the EPRDF, makes, implements and supervises the law. The question: why did EPRDF opt for a unitary state? It did not have major problems passing and implementing legislations, and supervising performance.

It may have had occasional small headaches from the opposition primarily in implementation, such as, for example, the need for transparency in waging war in Somalia Republic or budget approval. But these and others have never paused major hurdle to overcome for its actions. Furthermore, the oppositions are so divided and procedures for public organization and demonstration are so stringent that they could not manage to rally the public behind them. So what is EPRDF afraid of if it maintained the weak opposition in parliament? Did its election strategy mistakenly lead to this result as Meles claimed or EPRDF has a hidden agenda?

It may be argued that (i) preventing party observers from attending the polling day, which gave the opportunity for the incumbent to manipulate the ballots or to rig the vote, and (ii) registering voters who promised to vote for EPRDF and making sure that they did as promised indicated above, have major implications for the 100% election result. But did EPRDF foresee the election strategy to end up with this result? One insider told us that they did not. But it is EPRDF's tradition that it does not accept defeat and hence they have overdone the strategy, particularly to the extent of going to intimidate for ensuring voters who promised to vote for them shall do so. Furthermore, others said that the EPRDF does not want to see the humiliation that it had been suffering of late in parliament by some opposition parties members during debates. Still others also indicate that EPRDF feels badly insecure and over-reacts to stay in power. Others also indicate that EPRDF is unable to control the lower level cadres and administrators that the latter did whatever was necessary to maintain their jobs, given the green light by higher authorities for systematic manipulation of the election process and outcome. Still others say that as a police state, the government felt it could not afford to maintain the level of freedom experienced in the run-up to the 2005 federal and regional elections. Assuming that all of these scenarios and others contributed to its achievement of 100 percent vote and hence a unitary state, the question now remains how would EPRDF deal with the opposition and the whole people from now onwards?

Would it continue to pretend that it supports multi-party democracy and do the reverse as in the past, although there is only one party rule? Would it continue to pretend that it respects human rights, democratic rights and the rule of law as prescribed in the Ethiopian Constitution and yet continue to limit these rights to the detriment of the people and opposition parties? Are these possible under a unitary system of government in which no opposition party participates in parliament? The international experience in general and that of the African experience in particular is not encouraging. But we all have to wait and see, hoping that EPRDF will swim out of the quagmire it has immersed itself.

On the part of the opposition what steps do we want EPRDF to take in order to ensure that the principles set in the preamble of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties are implemented, although it had completely annulled those related to May 2010 national and regional elections? Hence, it is the Way Forward that we wish to deal with next.

Part II: The Way Forward

AEUP would like to ask EPRDF how it intends to attend to the following major principles set out in the Electoral Code of Conduct for Political Parties, Proclamation No. 662/2009.

1. "Recognizing and accepting the benefit of reinforcing and continuing the role of the people as a source of state authority, its ownership and control thereof for which the

Ethiopian peoples have been struggling throughout their long history, and also recognizing the benefit of the implementation of human and democratic rights in their totality in our country to foster a culture of civilized and peaceful struggle and competition”;

In particular, under one party system EPRDF has embarked upon, how does it intend to reinforce the role of the people in state authority? They are no more true owners and controllers of state authority as no proportional representation exists in parliament in order to ensure entertainment of diverse views. Furthermore, how does it plan to implement human and democratic rights in their entirety “to foster a culture of civilized and peaceful struggle and competition” under a unitary system of government where no opposition is allowed to exist?

2. “Recognizing that the Electoral Board, the mass media and the justice institutions should be independent and impartial from any political party in their activities; recognizing also that the National Defence force is made to discharge its responsibilities based on the constitution without any influence from the political parties”;

Evidently the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, the mass media, both public and private, the Judiciary including the police force, the prosecution and the judges have not been independent and impartial in the past nineteen years in general and during the 2010 federal and regional elections in particular. The Ethiopian Army and armed militias have been deployed throughout the country for no reason other than intimidating and harassing the voters and hence have been operating under the influence of EPRDF. How would EPRDF in concrete terms ensure that these bodies shall be free, independent and impartial in recognition of their obligations set out in the Ethiopian Constitution and/or improve the Constitution to satisfy the stated principles?

3. “Recognizing that the three organs of government have undertaken to accept the duty and responsibility of being transparent, loyal and accountable and that they made a vow to uphold it in practice themselves and ensure that others do so too; further recognizing that political parties by taking note of this fact should stand for its realizations”;

Now that there is only one party, EPRDF, in parliament, how does the incumbent intend to ensure that the three organs of government are transparent, loyal and accountable to the people, let alone they see to it that others do likewise, when they are themselves under one party control, which from past experience would not hesitate to claim that it has made sure they are elected and is paying their remuneration and hence they are responsible to him and have to work for him? What are we to expect in relation to the separation of power of the three organs of government and how they control each other?

How do the opposition parties, being absent from parliament, help to realize these functions of the organs of government? Obviously, as opposition parties their job is not to advise the incumbent but to compete with it and win state power.

4. “Underscoring the need to enable political parties to play a vital role in strengthening multi-party system and democratic culture in good faith, tolerance and through the principle of give and take”;

How can opposition parties, left out of parliament, play vital role in strengthening multi-party system and democratic culture in good faith? How can they promote tolerance and the principle of give and take outside parliament where they could not attend discussions and negotiation of national and regional policies and programs, and evaluation of government performance records for further consideration of the policies and programs? As indicated above, after all opposition parties are not advisers of the ruling party but its contenders for government power.

5. “Cognizant of the need to create an environment that would enable the political parties to collectively stand for the implementation of this Code of Conduct Proclamation which contribute to the freedom of the mass media, human rights, democracy, rule of law and the over all development of peoples”;

How can the Ruling Party and the opposition parties stand together in the implementation of the Code of Conduct when every bit of the six major principles of the proclamation have been violated by EPRDF and its allied parties? These violations of the Code are summarised in Articles 27 through 32 as follows.

Article 27: Corrupt Practices, Abuse of Power or Coercion.

While this is clear from the many data the reader may have obtained or one that he/she might have gathered from different sources it is fair to give examples. Corrupt practices in registration, in bribing candidates to withdraw, use of government resources and coercing candidates to withdraw are some glaring examples that were truly committed by EPRDF during the election process.

Article 28: Intimidation, Violence or Any Obstruction in the Election Process

Indeed intimidating, beating and imprisoning of candidates and party observers as well as preventing candidates from campaigning during the permissible period by law were common phenomena all along the election process and through the polling day. This also includes killing of AEUP female candidate in front of her two children aged 10 and 12 years in cold blood by personal guard of the Police Commissioner in Gamo, Dasenetch Wereda, in her house one day after he threatened her to shut up about injustices she complained committed on the polling day.

Having killed the mother the children obviously screamed upon which he also wounded them and they are in hospital to this day as this paper is being written.

Article 29: Disseminating Information that Destabilize Peace and Security During the Election Process.

This part may not be obvious enough to the reader, so that we have produced some subtle examples. EPRDF has been agitating against AEUP by publicly speaking out that AEUP does not support national rights of the different ethnic groups, like for example, promotion of their language and culture. EPRDF has been telling smallholders in its campaign that AEUP is out to expropriate their land and to give them to the rich. Both of these and other claims are, of course, false accusations, propaganda ploys that are intended to smear AEUP's name.

Article 30: Disrupting Election Campaign of other Parties and Candidates.

This is another subtle article that may not be very clear to the reader. An example may clarify the situation. AEUP campaigns had been broken by EPRDF cadres starting very early in the campaign season in several places, claiming that they could not and should not campaign or they campaigned in prohibited areas like the market place when they did not, including glaringly in Amara and Oromiya regional states.

Article 31: Failure to Cooperate with Journalists and Election Observers.

Here the important word is cooperation. EPRDF cadres intimidated, harassed, beat and drove away or imprisoned our party observers so that they could not observe the polling day.

Article 32: Failure to promote the Code of Conduct and Failure to Condemn Illegal Acts.

Yes, there was gross violation by EPRDF cadres and administrators, which higher officials did not condemn. EPRDF officials turned blind eyes when their lower level officers committed acts of crime that is prohibited by the Code of Conduct. Such are intimidating, harassing, beating and imprisoning of candidates and party observers.

Part III: The AEUP Solution

The following recommendation may also be those of other opposition parties because they cover, by and large, major principles and confidence building mechanisms by which the ruling party and the opposition may start to work together again.

1. First and foremost, EPRDF must stop all acts of aggression and scary activities that are being waged against the people, opposition parties' members and their supporters

throughout the country following the polling day and agree publicly that such shall not be repeated again in the future. It is hard to understand why parties and their members who have been victims of EPRDF's and allied parties' cruel and crude politics during the election period should be subjected to further violence. Our members are once again being intimidated, harassed and asked to become members of EPRDF or allied parties or else face the consequences in the days ahead. This is testimony to the strategy that EPRDF and its allies are out for total submission of the opposition parties and that they would not tolerate multi-party system in the country, as has been the case in the communist countries.

2. Along with this first step EPRDF and allied parties should offer apology to the Ethiopian people at large and all opposition parties, their candidates and observers as well as to independent candidates who were victims of their cruel acts and crimes as well as pay any damage that has befallen the victimised men and women. This is the smallest responsibility that EPRDF and its allies should accept because the crimes committed in the above six articles are clearly manifested all over the country and witnessed by genuine observers, including the EPG members and the EU Observation Mission and, of course, they are well known by the Ethiopian people and all opposition parties. If EPRDF tolerated re-election and other measures as prescribed in the Code of Conduct when AEUP and the Forum asked for these penalties to be imposed on the incumbent, the apology would not have been necessary. Hence, why it is now of paramount importance to all victims and for future harmonious relations in the country.

3. Open up the media in all its phases. Privatize government media, all of them – radio, television and newspapers. Stop harassing the private media. Like everybody else the media learns from its experience without which it will remain ineffective, inefficient and minuscule business. The media should be able to operate as the “fourth arm of government” and with the full knowledge that it stands for the people **not** for the government.

4. Respect human and democratic rights, in particular institute freedom without any precondition in all of its aspects. Freedom from fear, and freedom of organization, speech, writing, public demonstration, movement and of work wherever one wishes. Change the law to this effect where necessary.

5. Re-establish truly free and independent NEBE. No amount of hypocrisy can hide the true face of the existing NEBE and its board members and election officers.

6. Truly free and independent judiciary, including the police force, prosecution and the judges, are absolutely necessary if justice should reign in this country. Thousands have died for this cause in our own life time. We should lastly realize it now. We must change the Constitution so that judges should also interpret the law. Ethiopia cannot remain an exception and must not be identified as ‘land of injustice’ in the 21st century.

7. The Ethiopian Army should be free and independent of the ruling party and the opposition and must do what it is originally organized for. The army is not meant to

maintain the incumbent in power under the guise of maintaining the constitution, the job of which is the function of the judiciary in particular and the whole people in general.

The army should safeguard the country against foreign aggression and maintain the integrity and sovereignty of the people to which effect the Constitution needs to be improved.

8. All businesses and capital must be liberalized: the public sector must be limited to its traditional function so that the private sector flourishes as it should. To this effect all government ownerships, including land, banking, telecommunication and other businesses must be privatized.

9. Differentiate the civil service from that of the ruling party and government. Openly declare that party organization and membership is incompatible with public service, and use of public property for private purpose under the guise of state power is abuse of power. Change the civil service law and its implementation modality to this effect.

10. Get all political party cells out of all administrative set ups, including from government and public organisations at all levels – Kebelles, Weredas, zones, municipalities and government offices as well as from women’s associations, women’s leagues, women’s forum, youth associations, youth leagues, and youth forum and other associations. Each of these mass organizations should operate by raising their own development means and should not be subservient to the ruling party under the guise of government support for their resources need.

11. The Ethiopian Partners Group (EPG) should be able to say a spade is a spade to the ruling party and government, using the appropriate diplomatic language and strategy. Individual EPRDF official’s manipulative skill should not be taken as astuteness and should not encourage the incumbent to the extent of going beyond its limits. We should all learn from such past experiences as those of Hitler, Mussolini, etc.

Having briefly explained the process and outcome of the election and the role of the ruling party and government in changing the true picture of the election in its absolute interest, we now wish to turn to how AEUP intends to contribute to what it expects the incumbent to do if Ethiopia should turn democratic even in this early 21st century, the most enlightened era so far awash with information technology and globalization. AEUP’s contribution is well pronounced in its political program and election manifesto for the 2010 federal and regional elections. What alternative does AEUP offer the Ethiopian people and intelligentsia that EPRDF did not and would not give them is the question? These are summarized under three categories – in political, social and economic development.

In Politics

1. Bring the intelligentsia together under the umbrella of Ethiopianism, which is briefly defined in footnote one earlier. We would organize conferences and discussion

fora in which historians, sociologists, anthropologists, politicians and other professionals speak from well documented research papers of the life and being of Ethiopia and Ethiopians, comprising at least 80 ethnic groups.

In organizing this the diplomatic and technical assistance that the EPG members together and/or individually give the intelligentsia and their organizations can make the difference in uniting the Ethiopian intelligentsia who have been in disarray for nearly the past four decades in general but more so in the last two decades in particular. The international community should use their experiences, past and present, to encourage our intelligentsia to learn how to think and work together. Our educational system and modern way of life and amenities are partly to blame for our deficiencies. Otherwise we could not have been so different from other societies to stay individualistic and aloof from each other for so long. If any thing our long history and operation under a central government on the one hand and our non-interrupted inter-trade, social ties, intermarriage, cultural interactions and other interdependencies for thousands of years on the other should have stimulated us to think and work together under one general theme of Ethiopianism. This is even more so, since we have now seen and felt the pinch of Eritrean cessation equally well with the seceding ethnic groups over nearly the last two decades.

2. Freedom: respect human rights, democratic rights and the rule of law. Respect independence and impartiality of the media, the electoral board, the judiciary and the army;

3. True separation of power among the three branches of government, namely: the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. In particular, there should not be any ambiguity whatsoever between the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch. During the negotiation of the Code of Conduct AEUP and other opposition partes were bluntly told that the legislative branch is under the control of the Executive Body. Furthermore, judges need to be the organ of interpretation of the law not the house of nationalities, which is equivalent but for its modus operandi to the senate in western democracies. Furthermore, the civil service should be separate from the ruling party. The army shall also be limited to its traditional role of keeping foreign aggression out and the territorial integrity of Ethiopia as in western democracies.

In Social Services

1. Universal potable water supply and universal primary health care as well as encouragement of traditional medicine supported by modern science and technology are important agendas.

2. Eradication of illiteracy, universal education, and expansion of technical education are the centre piece of education.

3. Full employment of youth and adults without inflation supported by training and retraining is the way to development. It is interesting to note EPRDF's wish for middle income status in 20 years for Ethiopia. What does it mean? In 20 years countries that are at present in the middle income class may have gone beyond it, as it is human nature for

aspiring and exerting the necessary effort for growth and development. Obviously these countries and for that matter other developed countries would not stand still to wait for us to reach the present middle income status. To wish middle income status in 20 years, therefore, serves only a propaganda ploy when in fact it is easy to imagine that the present poorest people but underdeveloped countries cannot catch up with the future middle income unless a different strategy is adopted. That different strategy is full employment of the country's resources without inflation. Ethiopia has the potential resources, including human and natural resources, for full employment provided the right strategy, policy and good governance are adopted by this and subsequent governments, for which AEUP stands firmly committed.

4. In Economic Development

1. Food security for all, getting rid of hunger once and for all, the national scourge and shame for nearly the past four decades.
2. True Expansion of the Private Sector: expand the role of the private sector; limit the public sector to its traditional role of security and regulation. Privatize ownership of land, banking, insurance services, telecommunication, electricity and other businesses.
3. Agro-industrial development with full realization of the contribution of agriculture and its needs for financial, technical and other resources. Unlike in the past 19 years agricultural development resource supply should be compatible with its gross national output.
4. Research and technology development in all aspects of our livelihoods should be the cornerstone of our development strategy in the future starting today. Ethiopia can no more afford to "sleep" in the 21st century.

The Intelligentsia and Their Organizations

1. Offer true olive branch to the intelligentsia and their organizations – unity under Ethiopianism. Now that we have the Eritrean experience behind us as ample testimony of the effect of cessation and division of a society, we have to learn lessons from it the hard way.
2. The Ethiopian intelligentsia and their organizations have to learn to listen to each other, comparing ones views to others and learning from their experiences. They must learn how to distinguish between a debate and discussion, learn when each is appropriate, and learn how to unduly emphasize one or the other at the expense of ones vision and long term objective. They must likewise learn flexibility, compromise and win-win situation as the way forward and to greatness, given ones world outlook and political philosophies.
3. To these effects organize truly educational conferences and seminars in both Amharic and English in which historians, sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists shall participate. Personalities with diverse views from national and international expertise. Such may be Professor Ayele, Professor Getachew Haile,

Professor Bahru, Professor Richard Panchrust, Professor Donald Levine and others to be invited for their contributions.

The Ethiopian Partners Group (EPG)

We want EPG to assist in all of the above areas in which they feel comfortable in light of their national policies and agendas. In addition, they may help provide short term training in the following fields.

1. English: drill in speaking and writing correct English, one of the bases for proper communication.
2. The concept and practice of politics; the essence of political associations vis a vis those of other social and economic associations.
3. Pluralistic democracy v ethnic-based democracy; the essence of freedom – theory, practice and consequences; comparative analysis of the presidential and parliamentary systems; impact of history and culture in building democratic governments and societies; the role of the media and practice in political, social and economic development; the separation of power among the three branches of government and how to maintain their freedom and independence as well as those of the civil service from infringement by the ruling party and government;
4. Debate v Discussion (discourse, talk); their essence, practice and consequence. How to think and organize oneself; the pros and cons of education, noting that, among other things, our education has not helped us to think together, to cooperate, to work together and to see that we have a common destiny which depends more on our togetherness than on our individuality, as important as the latter may be.
5. Last but not least we expect the EPG to declare in unison as a group that the 23 May 2010 National and Regional Elections were not free and fair and up to international standard. This should be followed up with encouraging EPRDF for re-election and to respond to the above issues in the Code of Conduct for Political Parties Proclamation 662/2009 to which it has subscribed and vowed in public and in their presence but broke every bit of it during implementation and to undertake all ten issues dealt under AEUP Solution in this paper. Should EPRDF and its allies fail to accept and implement these recommendations as the way forward, among other measures, the EPG should subject the incumbent to the maximum pressure similar to that which brought apartheid down tumbling in South Africa – economic sanction and political isolation. It must be noted that any relief and rehabilitation need that Ethiopia has because of poor governance could be tackled in the short to medium run through NGOs that the government has been subjecting to a limited role to the detriment of our people's interest.