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ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (E N C)

Press Release
November 4, 2008

Seventh Congress of the Ethiopian National Congress

The Ethiopian National Congress (ENC) held its Seventh Congress in Columbus, Ohio, from the 24th to the 26th of October. It was the first such meeting in many years bringing old friends and fellow compatriots that filled the meeting hall with positive spirit, camaraderie and moments to reconnect and reminisce. Judging from the participation and engagement of many founding members and invited guests, it was a productive and successful working congress.

Dr. Tsehai Berhaneselassie, ENC's outgoing Chairperson, opened the Congress with a moment of silence in remembrance of those fellow citizens who lost their lives while opposing voting irregularities in the aftermath of the May 15th, 2005 election. After welcoming participants and invited guests, Dr. Tsehai delivered an extensive report on ENC's achievements, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. She outlined a number of proposals directed at renewing and reenergizing the organization.

The report highlighted the state of the organization, its' achievements, successes and, failures. It also included bold new proposals and strategies to chart out its future directions. The report also examined the state of internal political situation in our country; the sad reversals by the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) of democratic gains made in May, 2005 and the chokingly narrowing political space for the opposition; the increasing limitation on the exercise of basic civil liberties; the chronic and yet pandemic splits that arise repeatedly among political organizations; and the desperate economic, political and social conditions that our people find themselves. The report concluded by underlining the need for all concerned Ethiopians to come together and dialogue to rectify the situation in a way that would settle national issues of collective concerns in a responsible manner.

Second, after evaluating a proposal developed by ENC's Executive Committee and informed by a presentation on the role of civil-society organizations in the struggle for freedom and democracy, the Congress unanimously resolved to chart a new set of strategies to guide the organization's future and its activities. Finally, following an analysis of the current political situation in Ethiopia, in general, and the conditions within the democratic opposition forces both at home and abroad in particular, the Congress sadly noted the challenges faced by chronic and yet pandemic splits that arise repeatedly among political organizations, and resolved to embark on a new and unique initiative, an initiative that is unlike any of the "coalition" or "unity formation" efforts of the past and designed to bring about sustainable peace, stability, unity and democratic transition in our country.

Since its founding congress held in Atlanta in October, 1997, the ENC has remained true to its core mission by actively and painstakingly promoting and facilitating the unity and constructive engagement of all Ethiopian democratic forces. Once again, the Congress resolved that ENC, as always, will continue to make efforts, based on its mission of facilitating and working toward permanent peace, unity, and the sustenance of the democratic and human rights of Ethiopians.



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In order to embark on these new initiatives, the Congress recognized that ENC has to be strengthened by increasing its membership and ensuring the active participation of all its members. Likewise, the Seventh Congress has resolved that ENC will accelerate its efforts to recruit new members and collaborate with like-minded individuals and other civil-society organizations through the National Priorities Consultative Process (NPCP) initiative that is already underway in the pursuit of its mission. An organized, sustained and active engagement of our citizens is a necessary condition to bring about sustainable peace, stability, unity and democratic transition in our country. Democratic civic organizations like the ENC are proven mediums to promote and bring about such change in our country. It is with this in mind that we call upon Ethiopians, at home and abroad, to join the ENC or support and collaborate with its activities.

Finally, the congress elected Dr. Erku Yimer as Chairperson, Dr. Imru Assefa, Ato Aklile Kebede, Ato Seyoume Kifle and Engineer Hezkel Eskender as Board of Directors that will lead the organization for the coming two years.

May God Bless and Protect Ethiopia
Ethiopian National Congress