

Wayforward to address the current political challenges in Ethiopia

(for discussion purpose)

By Temesgen Fikiru, Addis Ababa, 25 December 2017

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia constitution adopted on 8 December 1994 in its preamble stated as one of the objectives and the principles that “*Convinced that to live as one economic community is necessary in order to create sustainable and mutually supportive conditions for ensuring respect for our rights and freedoms and for the collective promotion of our interests*”. After 23 years of this constitutional exercise, however, recently challenges have emerged to derail the creation of one economic community, Ethiopia’s Growth and Transformation Plans and the nation-building efforts.

The Fundamental drawback of the Constitution of 8 December 1994, as seen now though solved problem back in 1991, is that States were created and dominate political parties have been organized along the “Ethnic line as perceived and practiced”.

The present challenges can be taken as an opportunity to transform the Constitution of 8 December 1994 to fit the present need of the people of Ethiopia and align to the Ethiopian Peoples long-standing aspiration to live together in peace and in prosperity.

Accordingly, the following amendments are suggested for public discussion in accordance with the Constitution of 8 December 1994 provision of Article 104-105 on the amendment.

This amendment through constitutional means is best carried, by not taking long-time, by the EPRDF in close discussions with the public and opposition parties so that the coming election will be exercised based on the new amended Constitution.

The 10 Articles amendments are proposed to separate Party & State structures from Ethnicity and to promote unity among the Ethiopian people.

Proposed Amendment:

Article 3

The Ethiopian Flag

1. The Ethiopian flag shall consist of green at the top, yellow in the middle and red at the bottom, and shall have a national emblem at the center. The three colors shall be set horizontally in equal dimension.
2. The national emblem on the flag shall reflect the hope of Ethiopia people to live together in equality and unity.
3. Members of the Federation may have their respective flags and emblems and shall determine the details thereof through their respective legislatures.
4. The National flag will be posted in all schools, government offices, and other institutions in all Federal states.

5. The State flags or emblem when posted side by side with the National Flag should have a size of proportional ½ of the National flag and post just below the lower edge of the National flag.
6. No State flag stands alone in any circumstances.

Article 5 (amendment)

Languages

1. All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition.
2. Amharic shall be the working language of the Federal Government and Federal states.
3. Members of the Federation may by law determine their respective working languages along with the Federal Working Language.
4. Any Citizen of Ethiopia shall learn in school additional one Ethiopian language of his choice other than mother tongue.

Article 8 Sovereignty of the people

1. All sovereign power resides in the Peoples of Ethiopia.
2. This Constitution is an expression of their sovereignty.
3. Their sovereignty shall be expressed through their representatives elected in accordance with this Constitution and through their direct democratic participation

Article 11 Separation of State and Religion; state institutions and ethnicity

1. State and religion are separate.
2. There shall be no state religion.
3. The state shall not interfere in religious matters and religion shall not interfere in state affairs.
4. Political parties and State institutions shall not be established along Ethnicity lines
5. Any State shall not be established based on Ethnicity

Article 39

Delete article 39 - As the organization of people according to article 39 definitions of a "Nation, Nationality or People" as a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory directly lead to dominant ethnic group formation and produce division rather than unity including article 39.1 (the secession provision).

Article 46 States of the Federation

1. The Federal Democratic Republic shall comprise of States.
2. States shall be delimited on the basis of the settlement patterns, administration ease, economic factors, language, identity and consent of the peoples concerned.

Article 47 Member States of the Federal Democratic Republic

The following Federal states are proposed (State names should not be similar to ethnic name) :

- 1) The State of Axum-Adwa-Mekele (Central+ southern+ Eastern zones)
- 2) The State of Shire and Humera (Northwestern + Western zones)
- 3) The State of Mille-Dubti-Behale (Zone 1 +2 + 4)
- 4) The State of Melka Werer-Gewane (Zone 3+ 5)
- 5) The State of Gondar & Gojam (North Gondar-Wag Himra + Awi + West & Esat Gojam and South Gondar)
- 6) The state of Wollo-Tegulet-Menez (North Wolo and South Wolo + North Shoa and Oromia Special Worda)
- 7) State of Shoa- Wolega-Arsi-Harerge (North, West, East and South West Shoa + East Wolega and Horgudru +West Welega and Kelem Welega + West Arisi and Arisi + West Harerge and East Harerge)
- 8) The State of Borena-Bale-Ilubabur & Jimma (Borena + Guji + Liben + Illubarur zone & Jimma zone + Bale)
- 9) The State of Fafen-Jarar -Nogob (Fafen+ Jarar + Nogob)
- 10) The State of Afder-Shebel- Korahe -Dolo (Afder + Shebele +Korahe+Dolo)
- 11) The State of Metekel-Assoa-Kamaish (Metekel+Assoa+Kamaish)
- 12) The State of Hawasa-Durame-Hosaaena-Butajira- Sodo (Gurage +Selti +Yem +Hadia +Alaba + Dawro + Wolaita+Sidama)
- 13) The State of Masha-Bench Maji-Wishwish-Ameya -Arbamich+Segen+Jinka-Demeka-Omorate- (South Omo+ Gomogofa and Segen + Sheka+Keffa+Bench Maji +Konta)
- 14) The State of the Gambela
- 15) The State of the Harer

Article 56

Political Party and Power (adapted from Ghana Constitution)

- 1 The right to form political parties is hereby guaranteed.
2. Every political party shall have a national character, and membership shall not be based on ethnic, religious, regional or other sectional divisions.
3. Maximum of three/four National political parties will be established.
4. A party shall have branches in all the States & Addis Ababa City Government and is, in addition, organised in not less than two thirds of the Woredas of each State and Addis Ababa City Government.
5. the parties name, emblem, colour, motto or any other symbol has no ethnic, regional, religious or other sectional connotations or gives the appearance that its activities are confined only to a part of Ethiopia.

6. A political party, or a coalition of political parties that has the greatest number of seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives shall form the Executive and lead it.

Article 61

Members of the House of the Federation

1. The House of the Federation is composed of representatives from each States & Addis Ababa City Government.
2. Each State shall be represented in the House of the Federation by at least one member and Each State shall be represented by one additional representative for each one million of its population.

Article 88 Political Objectives

1. Guided by democratic principles, Government shall promote and support the People's self-rule at all levels.
2. Government shall respect the identity of Ethiopia Peoples. Accordingly, Government shall have the duty to strengthen ties of equality, unity, and fraternity among them.

It is believed that starting now the process of Constitutional amendement to separate Party & State structures from Ethnicity will diffuse the current tension and the majority of Ethiopian will support such move including the Ethiopian Army and Securty forces.