

Ana Gomez still detached from reality

(Negash Mekuriya 12/11/13)

Last month, Ethiopia hosted the 26th Session of the African, Caribbean and Pacific-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly (ACP-EU/JPA). The joint plenary sessions were preceded by meetings of the three standing committees, the Committee on Political Affairs, the Committee on Social Affairs and the Environment and the Committee on Economic Development, Finance and Trade, on Saturday; and by two workshops and a meeting of the Bureau on Sunday. The meeting brought together elected representatives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific states and the European Union, with MEPs and MPs from the 78 signatory states to the Cotonou Agreement that is the basis for the ACP-EU partnership.

Most of the participants were focused on the objectives of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly; that is, how to promote the partnership and interdependence of North and South. However, there was one person with a different agenda. That is, Ana Gomes, a member of the European parliament from Portugal. Ana Gomes was head of the EU Election Observers Mission in 2005, when she encouraged Berhanu Nega et al to attempt a color-revolution by leaking a paper that claims they won the election. Though Mrs. Gomez denies her bad influence on the election, it was disclosed by the cables of US Embassy Addis Ababa as follows:

"The government learned from its mistakes in the 2005 national elections which saw a dramatic increase in opposition representation in the Parliament from 12 seats to over 170 seats in the 547 seat parliament. The over 30 percent vote and seats won was the best showing ever by Ethiopia's opposition. But, Meles said the post-election violence was the result of opposition arrogance and the meddling of international observers. The International Republican Institute's (IRI) election observers said the 2005 elections would be fair only if the opposition won at least 30 percent of the seats and vote, which it did. EU chief observer, Ana Gomes, a socialist EU parliamentarian from Portugal, declared the opposition the winners of

the 2005 elections based on urban polling results, when it was clear from the Carter Center that the ruling EPRDF had won (Note: Roughly 86 percent of the populace lives in rural areas. End note)."

However, Ana Gomez refused to take lesson from that, rather continued acting as a self-appointed boss of Ethiopia to date. She frequently attends meetings held by Berhanu Nega's ESAT and Ginbot-7 party and other violent groups under the pretext of promoting democracy. Ana Gomez's intent became even more explicit last year following Meles Zenawi's death, when she and like-minded neo-colonialists thought that the end of EPRDF has come and Ethiopia will become a banana republic they can boss around as they wish.

Last year, in a letter to EU Council President Barroso, Ana Gomez boldly said that "the hope for democratic transition and openness that we felt" after the death of Meles Zenawi "fell void in recent months". She accused Ethiopia and declared her support for insurgents and enemy countries, saying that:

"Apart from the refusal to settle the border with Eritrea, the military interference in Somalia, the barbarous repression in the Ogaden and against other people in Ethiopia...."

"It is my conviction that the repressive EPRDF regime in Ethiopia, however deviously smart, is not sustainable and will not ensure long term stability in the country and in the region."

Ana Gomez was under the impression that Ethiopia without Meles is a banana republic that will bow to any western pressure. That was the attitude observed among many western analysts and media outlets since July 2012, when the government announced that the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was receiving medical treatments. The likes of Ana Gomez engaged in fanciful forecast of policy changes and nationwide chaos, in particular they suggested the cessation of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance dam and the disruption of Ethiopia's role in conflict-resolution and peace-keeping across Africa.

Some of them were simply poorly informed, while others are in the business of sensationalizing issues. The rest were fantasizing or seizing the opportunity to disseminate make-believe stories in the hope that it might come true as well as to blacken the image of Ethiopia and EPRDF. Ana Gomez squarely fits in the later group.

However, they all were proven wrong by the Ethiopian people and the ruling party on August 21 (when Ethiopian people learnt that the Great Leader Meles Zenawi has passed away) and the months following that. As would be recalled, the public media read the statement issued by the Council of Ministers which said “with deep sorrow and grief, regrets informs the Peoples of Ethiopia that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who has led our country for the last 21 years with great wisdom and far-sightedness, passed away on August 20th at 11:40 pm at the hospital where he was under medical treatment”.

The statement was shocking to every Ethiopian. From the news-anchors, who read the statement, to the ordinary citizen, at home and workplace, the news was upsetting, their grief was visible. Many burst into tears blocking traffic on streets in Addis Ababa and elsewhere. Others stared on their TV and radio in disbelief, listening to the same statement again and again, as if they were expecting a correction. It was an even more saddening revelation that Meles dedicated his time to the successful implementation of the 5 year Growth and Transformation Plan, despite he was nursing a serious medical condition for the previous two years. The statement was not wholly depressing, however. It noted the comforting fact that:

“Meles has left behind a solid democratic and developmental constitutional system. Today, his ideas and vision of change have become the ideas of change for 80 million Ethiopians.”

“The constitutional developmental democratic system that has been left to us by a great leader is built on a firm foundation. We will always be proud of his achievements, remain confident in ourselves and nurture the unshakable belief that the efforts at making Ethiopia's renaissance a reality have indeed become irreversible.”

The Council of Ministers had also assured Ethiopians and well-wishers that the nation's policies will remain in place and there is no power vacuum. It noted that:

“His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn will, in accordance with the FDRE Constitution, continue to carry out the responsibilities of heading the Council of Ministers”.

The public reaction and the statement from the Council were not simply emotional reactions, both proven themselves again and again in the months following that. Days after the Ethiopian New Year, on September 14, the EPRDF Council convened as planned. As usual, it dealt with major national and party issues in a logical and orderly manner.

The Council reviewed the reaction to the passing of the late PM Meles Zenawi and supporters as well as partners and legitimate opposition parties. On behalf of EPRDF members, the Council pledged to renew its “promise to strive with superior drive to bring to the target the stride of renaissance launched by our organization and your effort”. It also underlined that the need to channel the broad public movement created in the mourning for the late PM to accomplish the Growth and Transformation Plan. The Council took time to reaffirm the party's and the government's commitment to advance its roles in regional and international levels.

At the end of the two-days meeting, after setting major directions and plans directions, that the Council dealt with the issue of electing new leaders. Even then the Council didn't rush to allocating positions arbitrarily rather in a scientific and systemic manner common to EPRDF. The Council deliberated on a document titled “the building leadership and the stride of the Ethiopian Renaissance”, which was compiled by the late PM Meles Zenawi and approved by the party Executive Committee last July. The Council deliberated on capacity building works to nurture and build leadership, to enhance the competence of governmental structure, on consolidating various public organizations and on fighting rent-seeking. The Council adopted the document as a basic document of the party, thus to be discussed at every level and be put into implementation.

Finally, in a secret ballot election, the Council elected by unanimous vote, among three nominees, Hailemariam Desalegn as the party Chairman. Demeke Mekonen was elected to serve as Deputy. A week later, on Sept. 21, the House of Peoples' Representatives convened in an orderly fashion to formally install Hailemariam Desalegne as Prime Minister of the nation. All this happened without a hitch, despite the fact that such a peaceful transition of power was the first in the country's history.

In the absence of signs of disagreement in the top leadership and any form of disturbance in the public at large, the overrated pundits had to admit, grudgingly, that the transition was smooth. However, as cynicism is their second nature, they continue picking up on minor events to predict forthcoming troubles and cast doubt in the mind of investors and other stakeholders. That was the attitude unmistakably demonstrated by Ana Gomez.

Ana Gomez, who didn't get a chance to speak at the 26th Session of the African, Caribbean and Pacific-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly (ACP-EU/JPA) in Addis Ababa, has been running to journalists to declare her grimly forecasts. She claimed:

"Meles died, he was the source of the repression; his own supporting group are divided. They are fighting with each other. There is indeed an opportunity to see Ethiopia change progressively, peacefully." Any normal person would find it hard to understand how a an infighting in the government would be "an opportunity to see Ethiopia change progressively, peacefully."

Unfortunately, in Ana Gomez's neo-colonial mid set, change and progress means the demise of an assertive government and a change of regime by a groups they can easily boss around. In her typical attitude of imagining things Ana Gomez claimed:

"I am heartened by the fact that PM Hailemariam [Desalegn] has started taking measures even against the high officials who are involved in corruption. I welcome the move that the PM Hailemariam has initiated the prosecution of high officials,

even a minister charged with corruption. I hope this will be the first step in the right direction. At the debate we were discussing the independence of the judiciary. I used the debate to say that Judicial Independence doesn't exist in Ethiopia, although it's stated."

Indeed, the fight against Corruption went to a higher level following the high-profile crack down last May. The Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission reported the detention of more than a dozen suspects including: Melaku Fanta (Director of the Federal government's Revenues and Customs Authority) and other government officials and businessmen.

However, despite the common perception, it was not a sudden development rather a cumulative outcome of the multifaceted systemic works conducted in the past decade. The Federal Ethics and Anti-corruption Commission had been fighting corruption for years. The strategic focus areas of the anti-Corruption struggle have been identified, in the past three years, as the land administration offices, the taxation agencies, public procurement, and the justice system.

In the last fiscal year, which started when Meles Zenawi was in office, the Commission completed the investigation of 339 cases; and achieved criminal verdict on 144 of them. Out of the 409 defendants that were brought to court in the stated period, 293 of them were convicted, raising its performance to a 100 per cent, as part of the GTP. Ana Gomez cares little about this sort of factual and logical errors. Quite the contrary, she claims to know better than everyone else. She boasted to a local magazine in Addis Ababa last month that:

"European citizens, European taxpayers, European Parliamentarians care about Ethiopia, democracy, development in Ethiopia, the efficiency of development assistance but the problem is they don't know what happens in Ethiopia. They are fooled by the leaders; leaders in the council of ministers and in the European commission. And also the development industry prevailing should continue without trouble. That is their vested interest. The tragedy is many people don't understand what is happening in Ethiopia."

However, Ana Gomez's know it all attitude becomes comical when she admits her ignorance about one of the major undertaking of Ethiopia's economic transformation endeavor. Ana Gomez is full of opinion about election, corruption, Meles Zenawi's death, our relations with Eritrea and Somalia, etc. But when it comes to development projects, like Gibe II dam, she says:

"I am very interested to learn about that. I need to note down that information. I have not been able to follow in detail all this development processes because I was not in the EU development committee."

Ana Gomez's problem is her source of information. As she admitted to a local media:

"I receive a mail, a standard letter everyday from an Ethiopian who manages to flee the country and who is somewhere in Kenya, UgandaNigeria asking me to write a letter to the UNHCR saying they need political asylum. So I know Ethiopia loses the best, most qualified generation not only because of lack of jobs but because there is politically closed environment with which these young qualified people cannot live."

It is little surprise that the lady misses the reality when her opinion is based on letters she received from people who have every reason to exaggerate matters in the hope of attaining asylum in the west. In truth, Ana Gomez knows little and cares little about Ethiopia. Her sole motivation is retaliating to the severe criticism she suffered in 2005 by Meles Zenawi. She disclosed the fact that she is stuck on 2005 when she said "I read the Ethiopian herald and it's all the same thing only better because PM Meles Zenawi is not writing now."

It is worth noting that Meles Zenawi never wrote on Ethiopian Herald before and after 2005. But the only article that was published under Meles Zenawi name in 2005 was a timeless rebuke to Ana Gomez and the likes of her.

"[Ana Gomez's group] has become part of the problem rather than the solution beginning with the highly speculative report they leaked, a report that I believe significantly contributed to the June events. It cannot therefore be dismissed so easily. We have to learn from the experience, and in order to do that we have to ask

why such a shoddy piece of work was issued in the name of the EU-EOM.

For some time now, the author of the report has been peddling a series of ideas on reforms that she says are necessary for Ethiopia. EPRDF had rejected those ideas with reasoned arguments. ..It was made abundantly clear to her and to all concerned that she has no business making recommendations, and that her mandate was to observe and report.

The good lady can apparently not take NO for an answer from the natives. ..The good lady apparently does not know her Ethiopian history, or her EPRDF's. She apparently does not understand that as soon as these merely bad ideas become tainted by association with an election observer turned self-appointed colonial viceroy hell-bent on twisting the arms of the government to force it to accept her dictates, merely discussing the ideas, let alone accepting them, becomes unthinkable. The good lady does not appear to understand that what her action succeeded in doing is put the last nail in the coffin of her "recommendations".

....As our brothers the Southern African freedom fighters used to say, in Portuguese, La Lutta Continua! the struggle for a prosperous and democratic Ethiopia must and will go on despite the challenges. We in the EPRDF have faced off many more serious challenges. We must face this one with the same unflinching commitment to principles and justice. We cannot and must not falter in the face of this or other, even more formidable challenges in the future."

Following that wisdom, Ethiopia achieved a decade of socio-economic stride as observed in the Joint Parliamentary Assembly by Dr. Joyce Laboso, Co-President of the ACP-EU/JPA, gave her testimony of Ethiopia's remarkable transformation as:

"The last time that Ethiopia hosted this Assembly was in February 2004, when the 7th Session of the JPA met in this very room. Nine years ago is not a very long time. And yet those of you who were here then could not have failed to see the remarkable transformation that has taken place in this city in this short span of time.

This is hardly surprising, given that Ethiopia's economy has been growing at a very fast rate of about 8% a year in recent years. It is gratifying to note how some of these developments are spurring growth

in other sectors of the economy, in a healthy mix of private and public investments from local and international investors.

What is remarkable still, about this growth is that it not being driven by mineral resources. These positive developments have been motivated by institutional, political and social reforms, and are beacons of hope and sources of inspiration."

Whether Ana Gomez will wake up to this reality or remain fixated on *self-appointed colonial viceroy* mentality, Ethiopia will stay the course.